



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 31 OCT 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	10/28 Military southern border mission extended
SOURCE	https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2022/10/28/pentagons-us-mexico-border-mission-extends-for-another-year/?utm_source=sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mil-ebb
GIST	<p>Federally-activated National Guard troops are expected to continue to deploy along the U.S. southern border through summer 2023, a Pentagon spokesman confirmed to Military Times on Friday.</p> <p>Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin approved a Homeland Security Department request sent in September to extend the mission through fiscal year 2023, according to the spokesman, who was not authorized to speak on the record about the decision.</p> <p>Austin's approval keeps the number of authorized troops capped at 2,500, though the spokesman said that there are currently 2,708 National Guard members deployed.</p> <p>"The difference in those two numbers reflect overlap as units and personnel swap out during the month of October to coincide with the new [fiscal year]," the spokesman said.</p> <p>The extension sends the border mission into its fourth year, after former President Donald Trump first sent more than 5,000 troops to the border in 2018, followed by a national emergency declaration in early 2019.</p> <p>The authorized troop level has drawn down in the years since the mission began sending rotations of National Guard troops to support Customs and Border Protection with surveillance, intelligence and aviation support.</p> <p>President Joe Biden canceled Trump's emergency declaration after taking office in early 2021, but DHS has continued to ask DoD for support.</p> <p>In addition to the federal presence, Texas has assigned 5,000 troops on state active duty to its border as part of Operation Lone Star.</p> <p>Air Force Gen. Glen VanHerck, who oversees the border mission, has said that border protection shouldn't be a military mission except in emergency situations.</p> <p>"I think they (Customs and Border Protection personnel) need to be funded," he said. "I think they need to also utilize technology, technology of the future that can help them get away from a manpower-based, intensive problem, to one [where] they can utilize technology as well, to solve their challenges."</p> <p>Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told Military Times in November 2021 that he and Homeland Security Secretary Alex Mayorkas have discussed the border mission, but didn't offer any benchmarks or conditions for ending the mission.</p> <p>"I've talked with the secretary on a number of occasions, and we both agree that our goal is for them to develop the capability to conduct operations on their own," Lloyd said. "And so over time you'll see our presence diminish, and you'll see Homeland Security take this over on their own."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Fentanyl OD deaths amid mistaken beliefs?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/as-fentanyl-drives-overdose-deaths-mistaken-beliefs-persist/
GIST	<p>Lillianna Alfaro was a recent high school graduate raising a toddler and considering joining the Army when she and a friend bought what they thought was the anti-anxiety drug Xanax in December 2020.</p> <p>The pills were fake and contained fentanyl, an opioid that can be 50 times as powerful as the same amount of heroin. It killed them both.</p> <p>“Two years ago, I knew nothing about this,” said Holly Groelle, the mother of 19-year-old Alfaro, who lived in Appleton, Wisconsin. “I felt bad because it was something I could not have warned her about, because I didn’t know.”</p> <p>The drug that killed her daughter was rare a decade ago, but fentanyl and other lab-produced synthetic opioids now are driving an overdose crisis deadlier than any the U.S. has ever seen. Last year, overdoses from all drugs claimed more than 100,000 lives for the first time, and the deaths this year have remained at nearly the same level — more than gun and auto deaths combined.</p> <p>The federal government counted more accidental overdose deaths in 2021 alone than it did in the 20-year period from 1979 through 1998. Overdoses in recent years have been many times more frequent than they were during the black tar heroin epidemic that led President Richard Nixon to launch his War on Drugs, or during the cocaine crisis in the 1980s.</p> <p>As fentanyl gains attention, mistaken beliefs persist about the drug, how it is trafficked and why so many people are dying.</p> <p>Experts believe deaths surged not only because the drugs are so powerful, but also because fentanyl is laced into so many other illicit drugs, and not because of changes in how many people are using. In the late 2010s — the most recent period for which federal data is available — deaths were skyrocketing even as the number of people using opioids was dropping.</p> <p>Advocates warn that some of the alarms being sounded by politicians and officials are wrong and potentially dangerous. Among those ideas: that tightening control of the U.S.-Mexico border would stop the flow of the drugs, though experts say the key to reining in the crisis is reducing drug demand; that fentanyl might turn up in kids’ trick-or-treat baskets this Halloween; and that merely touching the drug briefly can be fatal — something that researchers found untrue and that advocates worry can make first responders hesitate about giving lifesaving treatment.</p> <p>All three ideas were brought up this month in an online video billed as a pre-Halloween public service announcement from a dozen Republican U.S. senators.</p> <p>A report this year from a bipartisan federal commission found that fentanyl and similar drugs are being made mostly in labs in Mexico from chemicals shipped primarily from China.</p> <p>In New England, fentanyl has largely replaced the supply of heroin. Across the country, it’s being laced into drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamine, sometimes with deadly results. And in cases like Alfaro’s, it’s being mixed in Mexico or the U.S. with other substances and pressed into pills meant to look like other drugs.</p> <p>The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency has warned that fentanyl is being sold in multicolored pills and powders — sometimes referred to as “rainbow fentanyl” — marketed on social media to teens and young adults.</p> <p>Jon DeLena, the agency’s associate special agent in charge, said at the National Crime Prevention Council summit on fentanyl in Washington this month that there’s “no direct information that Halloween is</p>

specifically being targeted or young people are being targeted for Halloween,” but that hasn’t kept that idea from spreading.

Joel Best, an emeritus sociology professor at the University of Delaware, said that idea falls in with a long line of Halloween-related scares. He has examined cases since 1958 and has not found a single instance of a child dying because of something foreign put into Halloween candy — and few instances of that being done at all.

“If you give a dose of fentanyl to kids in elementary school, you have an excellent chance of killing them,” he said. “If you do addict them, what are you going to do, try to take their lunch money? No one is trying to addict little kids to fentanyl.”

In midterm election campaigns, fentanyl is not getting as much attention as issues such as inflation and abortion. But Republicans running for offices including governor and U.S. Senate in Arkansas, New Mexico and Pennsylvania have framed the fentanyl crisis as a result of Democrats being lax about securing the Mexican border or soft on crime as part of a broader campaign assertion that Democrats foster lawlessness.

And when Democrats highlight the overdose crisis in campaigns this year, it has often been to tout their roles in forging settlements to hold drugmakers and distributors responsible.

Relying heavily on catching fentanyl at the border would be futile, experts say, because it’s easy to move in small, hard-to-detect quantities.

“I don’t think that reducing the supply is going to be the answer because it’s so easy to mail,” said Adam Wandt, an assistant professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Still, some more efforts are planned on the U.S.-Mexico border, including increasing funding to search more vehicles crossing ports of entry. The bipartisan commission found those crossings are where most fentanyl arrives in the country.

The commission is calling for many of the measures that other advocates want to see, including better coordination of the federal response, targeted enforcement, and measures to prevent overdoses for those who use drugs.

The federal government has been funding efforts along those lines. It also publicizes big fentanyl seizures by law enforcement, though it’s believed that even the largest busts make small dents in the national drug supply.

The commission stopped short of calling for increased penalties for selling fentanyl. Bryce Pardo, associate director of the RAND Drug Policy Research Center and a commission staff member, said such a measure would not likely deter the drug trade. But, he said, dealers who sell the products most likely to cause death — such as mixing fentanyl into cocaine or pressing it into fake Xanax — could be targeted effectively.

One California father who lost his 20-year-old daughter is pushing for prosecutors to file murder charges against those who supply fatal doses.

Matt Capelouto’s daughter Alexandra died from half a pill she bought from a dealer she found on social media in 2019, while home in Temecula, California, during a college break. She was told the pill was oxycodone, Capelouto said, but it contained fentanyl.

The dealer was charged with distributing fentanyl resulting in death, but he reached a plea deal on a lesser drug charge and will face up to 20 years in prison.

	<p>“It’s not that arresting and convicting and putting these guys behind bars doesn’t work,” Capelouto said. “The fact is we don’t do it enough to make a difference.”</p> <p>While some people killed by fentanyl have no idea they’re taking it, others, particularly those with opioid use disorder, know it is or could be in the mix. But they may not know how much is in their drugs.</p> <p>That was the case for Susan Ousterman’s son Tyler Cordiero, who died at 24 in 2020 from a mixture that included fentanyl after years of using heroin and other opioids.</p> <p>For nearly two years, Ousterman avoided going by the gas station near their home in Bensalem, Pennsylvania, where her son fatally overdosed. But in August, she went to leave two things there: naloxone, a drug used to reverse overdoses, and a poster advertising a hotline for people using drugs to call so the operator could call for help if they become unresponsive.</p> <p>Ousterman is funneling her anger and sorrow into preventing other overdoses.</p> <p>“Fentanyl is everywhere,” she said. “You don’t know what’s in an unregulated drug supply. You don’t know what you’re taking. You’re always taking the chance of dying every time.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 DHS gathered intel on Oregon protesters
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/oregon-arrests-donald-trump-race-and-ethnicity-portland-95743ad77f7fd228515bf6139c45b0b1
GIST	<p>SALEM, Ore. (AP) — U.S. Department of Homeland Security officials in the Trump administration compiled extensive intelligence dossiers on people who were arrested, even for minor offenses, during Black Lives Matter protests in Oregon.</p> <p>Initial drafts of the dossiers even included friends of the subjects as well as their interests, but those were later removed and replaced with a note that they would be made available upon request, according to an internal review by the Department of Homeland Security.</p> <p>The dossiers, known by agents as baseball cards, were previously normally compiled on non-U.S. citizens or only on Americans with “a demonstrated terrorism nexus,” according to the 76-page report. It was previously released last year but contains new revelations based on extensive redactions that were removed by the Biden administration.</p> <p>Ben Wizner, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union’s free speech, privacy and technology project, said the report indicates leaders of the Department of Homeland Security wanted to inflate the risk caused by protesters in Portland. The city became an epicenter of sometimes violent demonstrations in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, a Black man, by a Minneapolis police officer. But many protesters, including women belonging to a “Wall of Moms” ad hoc group and military veterans, were peaceful.</p> <p>“We have a dark history of intelligence agencies collecting dossiers on protesters,” Wizner said over the phone from New York, referring to domestic spying in the 1960s and 1970s against civil rights activists, Vietnam War protesters and others.</p> <p>“We need to be especially careful if agencies that are tasked with intelligence gathering are going to step in to look at protest activity and where Americans are exercising their First Amendment rights,” Wizner said.</p> <p>Protesters who break the law aren’t immune from being investigated, Wizner said, but intelligence agencies should be careful not to create “a chilling environment” for Americans to legally exercise their right to dissent.</p>

The report reveals actions carried out by the DHS' Office of Intelligence and Analysis in June and July 2020, when militarized federal agents were deployed to Portland.

When the dossiers, officially known as Operational Background Reports, were being compiled, some DHS analysts voiced concerns over the legality of collecting intelligence "on protestors arrested for trivial criminal infractions having little to no connection to domestic terrorism," the report said. Some of the employees even refused to participate.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, obtained the report with most redactions removed and provided it to reporters Thursday. Wyden, a member of the Senate select committee on intelligence, criticized DHS leaders in the Trump administration for actions revealed in the document.

"Political DHS officials spied on Oregonians for exercising their First Amendment right to protest and justified it with baseless conspiracy theories," Wyden said.

Brian Murphy, who was then the acting undersecretary of DHS' intelligence unit, insisted on calling violent protesters "Violent Antifa Anarchists Inspired," even though "overwhelming intelligence regarding the motivations or affiliations of the violent protesters did not exist," according to the report.

Top DHS leaders even wanted the department's Office of Intelligence and Analysis to create dossiers on everyone participating in the Portland protests, but Murphy advised that the unit could only look at people who were arrested.

Surveillance was broadly used in other cities as well during the 2020 protests, with federal agencies sending unmanned drones and military aircraft to assist local law enforcement. But it's not clear exactly how that surveillance was used: The ACLU filed a federal lawsuit against several government agencies seeking that information late last year, but the case is still underway in the Southern District of New York.

Still, some agencies have acknowledged the surveillance was problematic. An investigation by the Inspector General Department of the Air Force, completed in August 2020, found that Air National Guard aircraft was used to monitor protests in Minnesota, Arizona, California and Washington, D.C. without clear approval from military leaders.

The surveillance in Phoenix, Arizona was "particularly concerning," the Inspector General's investigation found, because documentation associated with the flight suggested it was being used to allow law enforcement agencies to rapidly deploy to locations where they hoped to deter protest or looting.

"There is no scenario in which it is acceptable or permissible to use DoD (Department of Defense) assets to deter demonstrations and protests, assuming they remain lawful," the report said.

The DHS' internal review on Portland also shows the baseball cards — which were usually one-page summaries — included any past criminal history, travel history, "derogatory information from DHS or Intelligence Community holdings," and publicly available social media. Draft dossiers included friends and family of protesters as well.

Wyden credited current Undersecretary for Intelligence and Analysis Kenneth Wainstein for reviewing the Trump administration's "unnecessary redactions" and releasing the unredacted report.

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Click on link to download PDF report:
<https://www.wyden.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/I&A%20and%20OGC%20Portland%20Reports.pdf>

HEADLINE	10/31 Grain ships sail despite Russia pullout
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/un-turkey-ukraine-press-ahead-with-black-sea-grain-deal-despite-russian-pullout-2022-10-31/

KYIV, Oct 31 (Reuters) - Twelve ships carrying grain left Ukrainian ports on Monday despite Russia having abandoned a U.N.-backed deal to guarantee exports from the war zone, suggesting Moscow had stopped short of reimposing a blockade that might have caused world hunger.

Air raid sirens blared across Ukraine and explosions rang out in Kyiv as Russia rained missiles down in renewed air attacks. Ukrainian officials said energy infrastructure was hit, knocking out power and water supplies in several areas.

But the resumption of food exports from Ukrainian ports suggested that at least one dire scenario had been averted for now. International officials had feared that Moscow would reimpose a blockade on Ukrainian grain, after Russia announced on Saturday that it was withdrawing from the U.N.-backed programme that escorts cargo ships through the Black Sea.

"Civilian cargo ships can never be a military target or held hostage. The food must flow," tweeted Amir Abdullah, the U.N. official who coordinates the programme.

Shortly after, Ukraine confirmed that 12 ships had set sail. The 354,500 tonnes of grain they carried was far more than typically leave in a single day, suggesting a backlog was being cleared after exports were interrupted on Sunday.

Ukraine and Russia are both among the world's largest exporters of food. For three months, the U.N.-backed deal has guaranteed Ukrainian exports can reach markets, preventing what international officials had said could have been global famine.

The news that Moscow was pulling out of the deal had sent global wheat prices soaring by more than 5% on Monday morning.

Moscow said it was forced to pull out of the shipping deal after blaming Kyiv for explosions that damaged Russian navy ships in a Crimean port on Saturday.

Ukraine has neither confirmed nor denied it was behind those blasts but says Russia's navy is a legitimate military target. Moscow said the blasts were caused by a fleet of sea and air drones.

The United States accused Russia of using food as a weapon, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Moscow was "blackmailing the world with hunger". Russia denied those accusations but said that with its naval forces damaged it was no longer able to guarantee safe shipping.

The ships that sailed on Monday included one hired by the U.N. World Food Programme to bring 40,000 tonnes of grain to drought-hit Africa.

"Even if Russia behaves hesitantly because it didn't receive the same benefits, we will continue decisively our efforts to serve humanity," Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, who helped mediate the grain deal, said in a speech.

"Our effort to deliver this wheat to countries facing the threat of starvation is evident. With the joint mechanism that we established in Istanbul, we contributed to the relief of a global food crisis," he said.

MISSILE STRIKES

Russia's missile strikes during the Monday morning rush hour repeated a tactic it has pursued this month of targeting Ukrainian civilian infrastructure, especially power stations.

Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said 18 targets, mostly energy infrastructure, were hit in missile and drone strikes on 10 Ukrainian regions.

"Another batch of Russian missiles hits Ukraine's critical infrastructure. Instead of fighting on the battlefield, Russia fights civilians," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said.

	<p>"Don't justify these attacks by calling them a 'response'. Russia does this because it still has the missiles and the will to kill Ukrainians."</p> <p>Foreign ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko said the missiles had caused electricity and water outages.</p> <p>"Russia is not interested in peace talks, nor in global food security. Putin's only goal is death and destruction," he said.</p> <p>There was no immediate response from Moscow.</p> <p>The U.S. ambassador to Kyiv, Bridget Brink, tweeted: "Like millions of Ukrainians, our @USEmbassyKyiv team is once again taking shelter as Russia continues its callous and barbaric missile strikes on the people of Ukraine in an effort to leave the country cold and dark as we approach winter."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Fentanyl strikes the West coast
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/fentanyl-california-santaclara/2022/10/30/id/1094097/
GIST	<p>The powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl that is fueling the unprecedented rise in drug-related deaths across California and other states is now targeting America's youth.</p> <p>The drug said to be 50 times more potent than heroin, has taken its toll on places like San Francisco's Tenderloin district but also most upscale neighborhoods like that of the Bay Area.</p> <p>Users tend to be unaware that they have even taken the drug, forcing schools to stock up on medication to reverse the effects of overdoses. Experts recommend using test strips to detect if the pills have been laced with fentanyl.</p> <p>"We are not trying to scare you," said Chelsea Shover to the Mercury News. "But we are trying to tell you what's happening now, and it is different than what was happening a few years ago."</p> <p>Shover is an assistant professor of epidemiology and health services research at UCLA and has co-authored a 2020 study on fentanyl's spread to the West Coast.</p> <p>Fentanyl's stranglehold on California is starkly depicted by the state's spike in death records.</p> <p>In 2020, 4,000 people died of fentanyl overdoses — more than double the previous year while trafficking through the Mexico border remains unchecked, allowing the cheap drug to make a home in local drug markets.</p> <p>Last year was the first time California's death rate from all drug overdoses surpassed that of lung cancer, ranking just below hypertensive heart disease. The increase was almost entirely due to fentanyl which recorded 5,722 deaths, according to the California Department of Vital Statistics.</p> <p>For perspective, in 2021, an estimated 4,258 people died in auto accidents in California, and there were 2,548 homicides.</p> <p>From 2018 to 2021, the opioid death rate among those 15 to 19 years old quadrupled. For those between the ages of 20 to 24, the rate surged to nearly seven times. The spikes occurred even as the overall drug use rate among teens remained stable, according to experts.</p> <p>Before the epidemic, the total number of yearly deaths for Californians ages 15 to 24 hovered around 3,000. Since 2020, that number has increased to 4,000, with fentanyl accounting for more than 750 deaths in each of the prior two years.</p>

	<p>Shover believes that number will continue to increase “until we actually respond.”</p> <p>Schools across Santa Clara were given Narcan, an over-the-counter nasal spray that prevents fatal fentanyl overdoses. Administrators were also provided training; nonetheless, the Superintendent of Schools worries that the students are already consuming “study drugs” like Adderall and common painkillers, which they purchase from unlicensed vendors on the internet.</p> <p>Besides the teens, adults between 30 and 34 reached a record high in California with 33 deaths per 100,000 in 2021 — the highest of any age group.</p> <p>San Francisco remains ground zero with nearly double the opioid death rate of the second most impacted of the Bay Area, Sonoma.</p> <p>In Contra Costa and Santa Clara counties, the rate more than doubled from 2018 to 2021 as fentanyl flooded the market. In Alameda, it more than tripled, and in Marin, it nearly quintupled.</p> <p>Edward Liang of the Major Crimes and Drug Trafficking Team of the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office says Interstate 5 became a fentanyl trafficking route for Mexican cartels. They use raw materials trafficked over the border to produce the fentanyl pills that are now in the Bay Area.</p> <p>Liang says the cost associated with making fentanyl are low compared to other drugs, and because of its potency, dealers earn more off less.</p> <p>Attorney General Rob Bonta announced a fentanyl task force which has led to the seizure of more than 4 million pills and nearly 900 pounds of fentanyl powder since April 2021.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/31 China internal reports fall prey censorship?
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/health-china-beijing-covid-wuhan-3c199e3f1a084013da18fc9e6061e775
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — When the coronavirus was first detected in Wuhan in late 2019, reporter Liao Jun of China’s official Xinhua News Agency told conflicting stories to two very different audiences.</p> <p>Liao’s news dispatches assured readers the disease didn’t spread from person to person. But in a separate confidential report to senior officials, Liao struck a different tone, alerting Beijing that a mysterious, dangerous disease had surfaced.</p> <p>Her reports to officials were part of a powerful internal reporting system long used by the ruling Communist Party to learn about issues considered too sensitive for the public to know. Chinese journalists and researchers file secret bulletins to top officials, ensuring they get the information needed to govern, even when it’s censored.</p> <p>But this internal system is struggling to give frank assessments as Chinese leader Xi Jinping consolidates his power, making it risky for anyone to question the party line even in confidential reports, a dozen Chinese academics, businesspeople and state journalists said in interviews with The Associated Press.</p> <p>It’s unclear what the impact has been, given the secretive nature of high-level Chinese politics. But the risk is ill-informed decision-making with less feedback from below, on everything from China’s stance on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine to its approach to the coronavirus.</p> <p>“Powerful leaders become hostages,” said Dali Yang, an expert on Chinese politics at the University of Chicago. “They actually are living in cocoons: protected, but also shielded from information that they should be open to.”</p> <p>The reports are classified as state secrets, giving them an air of mystery in China. They are called “neican,” which is pronounced “NAY-tsahn” and means “internal reference.”</p>

They report on what would be considered staples of journalism in many other countries: corruption, strikes, public criticism, industrial accidents. In China, such matters can be too sensitive for public consumption, as they “could damage the Party’s reputation,” a 2020 Chinese academic paper says.

Newspapers, think tanks and universities across China each have their own classified reporting channel, sending intelligence up to local and provincial officials. They monitor air pollution in industrial Hebei province and guide the disposal of spoiled pickles in Hunan, a region famed for its cuisine.

But a few outlets, such as Xinhua and the state-controlled People’s Daily, supply intelligence directly to China’s rulers. Their confidential reports have toppled officials, changed policy, and launched government campaigns against poverty and waste.

The Communist Party calls internal reporting a secret weapon, acting as its “eyes and ears,” while propaganda acts as its “throat and tongue.”

Those who write internal reports are thoughtful, open-minded and often critical of the government, says Maria Repnikova, a Chinese media expert at Georgia State University.

They can face threats or intimidation, even when backed by the state, with officials taking extreme measures to block bad news from reaching their superiors.

“They are quite cautious about what goes in there, because they still have gatekeepers,” Repnikova said. Xi is intimately familiar with the power of this internal reporting system, said Alfred Wu, a former reporter who met Xi when he governed Fujian province. Xi cultivated ties with reporters from Xinhua and the People’s Daily, the outlets with direct, confidential lines of communication to Beijing — and thus, the power to influence his career.

“He’d always mingle and socialize with journalists,” Wu said. “Xi’s street smarts helped him so much.” After coming to power in 2012, Xi stifled dissent and launched an [anti-corruption campaign](#) that jailed rivals. The crackdown has made reporters more cautious about what they write in internal memos.

Xi took control of Xinhua, which nominally reports to the No. 2 official, the premier. Under Xi, Xinhua at times began to ignore Premier Li Keqiang, whose frustrations boiled over in an internal meeting, said Wu and a state media journalist with knowledge of the matter, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive subject.

A Xinhua journalist famed for internal reports that helped take down a senior executive at a state company is now unable to publish, according to a close associate, because the risks are too big.

“Before, he could make these disclosures because Xinhua had the power to protect him,” the associate said, declining to be named for fear of retribution. “Now, they say he can’t report these things anymore.”

The internal reports system was also vulnerable to corruption. Officials and businesspeople manipulated it to lobby for their interests. In one incident, Shanxi province officials gave cash and gold ingots to reporters to cover up a mine accident that killed 38 people.

Xi’s crackdown has reined in corruption, but also sidelined many of Xi’s competitors and paralyzed low-level officials, who are reluctant to act without clear permission from the top.

The government’s tightening grip on the internet under Xi is also warping the internal reports.

Decades ago, there were few ways for officials to know what ordinary people thought, making the reports a valuable channel of insight. But the internet “handed everyone their own microphone,” [the People’s Daily wrote](#), resulting in an explosion of information that internal reports struggled to analyze. The internet also posed a threat: Critics bonded online, organizing to challenge the state.

Xi tackled both challenges. Under him, China beefed up big data analysis to harness the vast tide of information. Internal reports now cite the internet more and more, with some bulletins made up largely of social media posts.

Xi also launched a campaign against “online rumors” and put millions of censors to work. One of the first to be detained was [an investigative journalist accusing an official of corruption](#).

So while internal reports now draw heavily on online information, the internet itself has become strictly censored, which can distort the message sent to the top.

Electronic surveillance has also become pervasive under Xi, making it tougher for sensitive information to be shared, one current and one former state media journalist said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they weren’t authorized to speak to foreign media. Communications are heavily watched, keeping officials and experts, not just dissidents, under the gaze of the state.

As a result, people withhold critical information — sometimes, with [catastrophic consequences](#). In the early days of the virus outbreak in Wuhan, Xinhua’s Liao reported [the arrest of eight “rumormongers”](#) for spreading “false information.”

In fact, they were [doctors warning each other](#) about the emerging virus in online chats. Her story discouraged others from speaking up, leaving the central leadership blind to the virus’ spread.

She also [wrote an internal report](#) alerting Beijing to notices from Wuhan health authorities leaked online. But instead of galvanizing swifter action, her reports lulled officials into thinking the outbreak was under control, according to Yang, the University of Chicago professor.

“It’s a systemic issue,” Yang said. “They operated in a system that choked off channels of information for good decision-making.”

The information department of the State Council, China’s Cabinet, declined to comment. Xinhua did not immediately respond to an AP request for comment.

The virus story illustrates a paradox of the internal reports: The tighter controls are, the more valuable the reports become. But tighter controls also make it harder to find reliable information.

Interviews with Chinese academics suggest when it comes to decisions made by the top, there’s now little room for discussion or course correction.

Though China hasn’t expressed direct support for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Beijing’s stance is clear: Under Xi’s “no limits” partnership with Russia, officials voice sympathy with Moscow’s grievances with the West, portraying the U.S. as a hypocritical bully and NATO as the aggressor.

But in private conversation, many Chinese foreign policy experts express views that diverge from the party line. That diversity of opinions, though, isn’t being conveyed to China’s leaders, some intellectuals fear.

“There’s much more diversity of opinions than one would assume,” said one academic, declining to be named because they were not authorized to speak to the press.

At the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a book published in Russia wasn’t allowed to be translated into Chinese because it had sections critical of Putin, according to an academic familiar with the academy’s Russia experts.

	<p>One expert wrote an internal report suggesting China's foreign minister call his Ukrainian counterpart, the academic said. When the call took place about a week later, many academics congratulated the expert in a group chat.</p> <p>Then, one of the academics said the expert should recommend Xi call Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "If I do that, I won't be able to write another report again," the academic recounted the expert writing, speaking on condition of anonymity because of fear of retribution.</p> <p>Xi hasn't spoken with Zelenskyy since the invasion began.</p> <p>Many experts worry China has alienated Europe by favoring Russia. A landmark investment deal with the European Union looks all but dead, and Europe is increasingly aligning its China policy with the latter's biggest rival, the United States.</p> <p>One scholar took a calculated risk to get his views heard. Government adviser Hu Wei published an online essay in March criticizing the war and arguing Beijing should side with Europe.</p> <p>Hu wrote publicly because he worried his bosses wouldn't approve an internal report, according to Zhao Tong, a fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Even if the piece was censored, he reasoned, it might get the attention of senior officials.</p> <p>"The information bubble is very serious," Zhao said. "I'm not sure even the authorities have a grasp of how popular a certain view really is."</p> <p>More than 100,000 people viewed Hu's essay online. Within hours, it was blocked.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Official: no specific threat to elections
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/30/politics/jen-easterly-cyber-threat-midterm-elections/index.html
GIST	<p>There are no "specific or credible" threats to disrupt election infrastructure in this year's midterm contests, one of the nation's top cybersecurity officials said Sunday, even as the federal government remains concerned about attempts – both online and in-person – to interfere in the vote.</p> <p>"It is a very complex threat environment. You have cyber threats, you have insider threats, you have rampant disinformation and, yes, very worryingly, you have threats of harassment, intimidation and violence against election officials, polling places and voters," Jen Easterly, the director of the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CISA, told CBS.</p> <p>"Let's be really clear," Easterly said, "that has to stop."</p> <p>That appraisal of election-year threats comes as tensions are rising over the potential for violence surrounding this year's elections, partly fueled by online extremism and fraudulent information about election security.</p> <p>The warnings took on alarming urgency Friday, when a man who'd previous posted memes and conspiracy theories about the 2020 election allegedly attacked House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband at their home in California.</p> <p>President Joe Biden, voting early in his home state of Delaware, warned Saturday that online conspiracies and disinformation were directly tied to real-life violence like the attack on Paul Pelosi.</p> <p>"You can't condemn the violence unless you condemn those people who are arguing that the election is not real," he said outside a polling station. "The talk has to stop. That's the problem."</p>

Federal officials on Friday [warned that domestic violent extremists pose a heightened threat](#) to the 2022 midterm elections in a joint intelligence assessment sent to state and local officials and obtained by CNN.

The bulletin, released by the Department of Homeland Security, FBI, US Capitol Police and National Counterterrorism Center, says that perceptions of election fraud will likely result in heightened threats of violence. The bulletin did not list any specific credible threats.

Enduring perceptions of election fraud related to the 2020 general election continue to contribute to the radicalization of some violent extremists and likely would “increase their sensitivity to any new claims perceived as reaffirming their belief that US elections are corrupt,” according to the assessment.

Easterly said Sunday that disinformation about elections “can be used to sow discord that can undermine confidence in election integrity, and that can be used to incite violence.”

“We’ve seen Russia, we’ve seen Iran, we’ve seen China, use the playbook for influence operations,” she told CBS. “That’s why it’s so important that Americans realize that they need to build resilience against that.”

The [FBI said earlier this month](#) that Russian and Chinese government-affiliated operatives and organizations are promoting misinformation about the integrity of American elections. The assessment underscored how the explosion of voting conspiracy theories in the US has created fertile ground for foreign operatives since former [President Donald Trump](#)’s 2020 electoral defeat.

Some election officials have called on CISA to do more to help them combat disinformation and to help protect election officials. CISA rejected a multimillion proposal from a contractor to protect election workers from harassment in part because of legal concerns and questions about the plan’s efficacy, [CNN reported last month](#).

In the weeks since CNN reported that election officials have called on CISA to do more to help them combat misinformation, Easterly, the agency’s director, has tweeted and spoken publicly about election security multiple times.

On Election Day, Easterly said her agency will be in “direct communication with all of the state and local election officials whose job it is to run and administer elections. We’re going to be working to share information, and we’re going to be working to be able to respond to anything that happens.”

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HEADLINE	10/31 Day 250 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/31/russia-ukraine-war-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-250-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy claimed his forces repelled a “fierce offensive” by Russian troops in the eastern Donetsk region. “Today they stopped the fierce offensive actions of the enemy,” Zelenskiy said in his Sunday night address. “The Russian attack was repelled.” The fiercest fighting in Donetsk region has been around the towns of Bakhmut and Avdiivka.• Russia’s Black Sea flagship vessel, the Admiral Makarov, was damaged and possibly disabled during an audacious Ukrainian drone attack over the weekend on the Crimean port of Sevastopol, according to an examination of video footage. Open-source investigators said the frigate was one of three Russian ships to have been hit on Saturday. A swarm of drones struck Russia’s navy at 4.20am. Aides to Zelenskiy hinted the country was behind the well-orchestrated raid, though his government has not claimed responsibility.• In the wake of the Sevastopol attack the Kremlin said it was pulling out of a UN-brokered grain deal that allows civilian ships to export grain and fertiliser from Black Sea ports. Russia claimed it could not “guarantee safety of civilian ships” travelling under the pact after the attack on its Black Sea fleet. Zelenskiy, however, said Moscow was looking for a pretext to end the

	<p>initiative. It had been “deliberately aggravating” the food crisis since September, he said in a video address.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The international community condemned Russia’s decision to suspend the UN-brokered Black Sea grain initiative. US president Joe Biden described the move as “purely outrageous” while US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said Russia was weaponising food. The European Union called on Russia to reverse its decision. “Russia’s decision to suspend participation in the Black Sea deal puts at risk the main export route of much-needed grain and fertilisers to address the global food crisis caused by its war against Ukraine,” EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, said. • The UN secretary general, António Guterres, said he was “deeply concerned” by Russia’s suspension of the deal and delayed his departure to attend the Arab League summit in Algiers for a day to try to revive it. Russia requested a meeting on Monday of the UN’s security council to discuss the issue. Guterres was engaged in “intense contacts” to get the agreement back and spoke to the EU’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell. • The United Nations, Turkey and Ukraine said they will press ahead to implement a Black Sea grain deal with a transit plan in place for 16 ships on Monday, despite Russia suspending its participation in the pact. The UN, Nato, the EU and the US have all urged Russia to reverse its decision to pull out of the deal. In a statement, the Joint Coordination Centre (JCC) in Istanbul, where Russian, Ukrainian and Turkish and UN personnel are working, said the three delegations had also agreed for inspections to be provided on Monday to 40 outbound vessels. • Kyiv’s infrastructure ministry said on Sunday that 218 vessels were now “effectively blocked” in its ports – 22 loaded and stuck at ports, 95 loaded and departed from ports, and 101 awaiting inspections. • Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, expressed “hope” that Joe Biden will recall the 1962 Cuban missile crisis when dealing with the war in Ukraine. In an interview for a Russian state television documentary on Sunday, Lavrov said there were “similarities” between the ongoing war in Ukraine and the 1962 confrontation. “I hope that in today’s situation, President Joe Biden will have more opportunities to understand who gives orders and how,” Lavrov said. “The difference is that in the distant 1962, Khrushchev and Kennedy found the strength to show responsibility and wisdom, and now we do not see such readiness on the part of Washington and its satellites,” he added.
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HEADLINE	10/30 Russia Black Sea flagship damaged
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/30/russias-black-sea-flagship-damaged-in-crimea-drone-attack-video-suggests
GIST	<p>Russia’s Black Sea flagship vessel, the Admiral Makarov, was damaged and possibly disabled during an audacious Ukrainian drone attack over the weekend on the Crimean port of Sevastopol, according to an examination of video footage.</p> <p>Open-source investigators said the frigate was one of three Russian ships to have been hit on Saturday. A swarm of drones – some flying in the air, others skimming rapidly along the water – struck Russia’s navy at 4.20 am. Video from one of the sea drones shows the unmanned vehicle weaving between enemy boats.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials said it was unclear if the Admiral Makarov was badly crippled, or had escaped with light damage. Unconfirmed reports said its hull was breached and radar systems smashed. Social media recorded loud explosions in the southern part of Sevastopol, in an area known as Riflemen’s Bay. A Russian navy school is located nearby.</p> <p>The ministry of defence in Moscow said Ukraine used nine air and seven sea drones, several of which were intercepted, including by a Russian helicopter. It made no mention of the Admiral Makarov. The ministry admitted there was “minor damage” to a minesweeper, the Ivan Golubets.</p> <p>On Sunday, Moscow said the drones had been recovered and were being analysed. The ministry said they were equipped with Canadian-made navigation modules. It blamed the UK for the attack and said a Royal</p>

Navy unit masterminded operations from the southern Ukrainian port of Ochakiv. The UK government has dismissed this.

A Ukrainian journalist, Andriy Tsaplienko, shared dramatic footage shot by a drone in action off the Crimea coast in which it appeared to dodge bullets hitting the water on its way to a target ship. He said the Admiral Makarov was damaged along with at least two other ships that carry Kalibr cruise missiles, including a transport vessel – either the Chamois or Lightning. “There is a good chance that several ships are not just damaged but sunk,” he wrote.

On Sunday [GeoConfirmed](#), a volunteer group, said an “Admiral Grigorovich-class frigate” was a victim of the attack. After examining stills photos, it concluded: “Only the Admiral Makarov matches this class for the Black Sea Fleet.” The video stops when a drone reaches the Russian boat, it added, with the unmanned vessel “likely” blowing up on impact.

Aides to Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, have hinted the country was behind the well-orchestrated raid on Saturday. His government has not claimed responsibility. This is the second time Kyiv appears to have punched a hole in a prestigious Russian naval vessel, in a carefully planned operation that caught the Kremlin off-guard.

It follows the dramatic sinking in April of the Moskva battleship, a Soviet-built gun platform with a crew of 510. Many perished. That was the first time Russia had lost a flagship since the 1905 Russo-Japanese war, with the Moskva the largest vessel to be sunk in conflict since 1945. Russia’s entire Black Sea fleet now looks vulnerable to remote warfare.

[Andriy Zagorodnyuk](#), Ukraine’s former defence minister, described Saturday’s strike as “an interesting development”. “Whoever did it employed a group attack. It’s not like a single rocket hitting a target. It’s coordinated. A number of air and sea drones overload the Russian defence system. If you shoot one or two down, others get through,” he told the Guardian. “This is a swarm tactic.”

Zagorodnyuk said he was struck by the fact the drones had “a quite powerful live video connection”. They were able to record the attack, despite the fact they were in operation more than 100 miles from the Ukrainian coast. “That this can be done over this distance is remarkable,” he observed. By contrast, [the Iranian kamikaze drones that attacked Kyiv two weeks ago](#) were more primitive and “flew blind”, he noted.

Ukraine has shown it is able to strike at long-distance targets in Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014. It is presumed to have [struck the bridge connecting the peninsula with Russia](#), the [Saky aerodrome](#), and – two months ago – the naval headquarters building in Sevastopol. Zelenskiy has vowed to liberate Crimea, together with all of occupied southern and eastern Ukraine.

In the wake of the Sevastopol attack the Kremlin said [it was pulling out of a UN-brokered grain deal](#) that allows civilian ships to export grain and fertiliser from Black Sea ports. Zelenskiy, however, said Moscow was looking for a pretext to end the initiative. It had been “deliberately aggravating” the food crisis since September, he said [in a video address](#).

Russia’s actions had effectively blocked the passage of ships, he added, with 176 vessels stuck in the agreed grain corridor, some waiting for “more than three weeks”. They were unable to deliver their cargo to countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Bangladesh and Vietnam, he said.

Zelenskiy stressed: “A strong international response is needed now. Both at the UN level and at other levels. In particular, at the level of the G20. Ukraine has been and can continue to be one of the guarantors of global food security. Russian terror and blackmail must lose. Humanity must win.”

Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, said Moscow had taken the decision to “resume its hunger games long ago and now tries to justify it”. He [tweeted](#): “By suspending its participation in the grain deal

	<p>on a false pretext of explosions 220km away from the grain corridor, Russia blocks 2m tonnes of grain — enough to feed over 7 million people.”</p> <p>The UN secretary-general, António Guterres, said he was “deeply concerned” about the end of the deal. He delayed his travel to Algiers for the Arab League Summit by a day to focus on the issue, a UN spokesperson said on Sunday. Guterres was engaged in “intense contacts” to get the agreement back and spoke with the EU’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Pentagon: SATCOM antennas to Ukraine
SOURCE	https://defensescoop.com/2022/10/28/pentagon-sending-ukraine-satcom-antennas-for-the-first-time-via-new-275m-security-package/
GIST	<p>Four satellite communications antennas are among the weapons and assets the U.S. is delivering to Ukraine as part of a new \$275 million security assistance package, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh told reporters on Friday.</p> <p>This marks the first time SATCOM antennas coming directly from the Defense Department’s arsenal are being delivered to support Ukraine’s ongoing fight against Russia, she confirmed.</p> <p>Those capabilities are also being issued amid friction between SpaceX CEO Elon Musk and the DOD regarding future funding for the Starlink satellite communication network the tech mogul originally provided free-of-charge to some Ukrainians, enabling connectivity necessary to combat Russia’s invasion.</p> <p>“We’re seeing Ukrainian infrastructure and electrical grids being targeted by the Russians, and these antennas provide an additional capability on the ground at a critical time when Ukraine’s infrastructure is being hit. These SATCOM antennas are not intended to serve as a substitute for a service like Starlink — they help increase communication efforts on the battlefield,” Singh said during a press briefing at the Pentagon.</p> <p>Built by Musk’s SpaceX, the donated Starlink satellite internet terminals and associated capabilities have supplied the Ukrainian military with vital communication channels and helped members to remain connected even if their usual mechanisms are damaged in warfare. Last month, Musk reportedly penned a letter to Pentagon leadership warning that his company could no longer fund the satellites and services — and requested that DOD financially back Ukraine’s access to Starlink.</p> <p>Following deeper looks into how Starlink is funded, Musk more recently committed in a tweet to “just keep funding the Ukraine [government] for free” — at least for now.</p> <p>During a press briefing on Tuesday, Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder told reporters: “I don’t have any updates to provide in terms of what the DOD may be prepared to fund as it relates to satellite communication. As we’ve mentioned before, we are discussing that capability requirement with SpaceX and other companies. But, as of right now, I don’t have any announcements to make.”</p> <p>On Friday, Singh noted that the four SATCOM antennas in the new security package “are going to provide additional communications capabilities to the Ukrainians at a critical time, but are separate from what Starlink provides.” Such antennas can work with different types of satellites.</p> <p>Still, Singh said there’s no link to the uncertainty around the supply of Starlink resources and the announcement that the four SATCOM antennas are being delivered.</p> <p>“While the Ukrainians do have access to the Starlink capabilities, having additional SATCOM capabilities on the ground is certainly helpful for them. It provides for better ... command and control on the ground and so — but nothing to do with terms of access to Starlink,” she told reporters.</p>

Singh later told DefenseScoop in an email that DOD has “nothing to share in terms of what components these SATCOMS come from, that’s an op sec [operational security] issue.”

This new authorization is the Biden administration’s 24th drawdown of equipment from DOD inventories for Ukraine since August 2021. The U.S. has committed approximately \$17.9 billion worth of security assistance to Ukraine since Russia’s invasion in February, according to the Pentagon.

Beyond the SATCOM antennas, Singh confirmed that the latest security assistance package also includes:

- Additional ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS)
- 500 precision-guided 155mm artillery rounds
- 2,000 155mm rounds of Remote Anti-Armor Mine (RAAM) Systems
- More than 1,300 anti-armor systems
- 125 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs)
- Small arms and more than 2.75 million rounds of small arms ammunition.

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HEADLINE	10/30 Iran large rallies defy final warning
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/30/iranians-hold-large-rallies-in-defiance-of-warning-by-revolutionary-guards-head
GIST	<p>Thousands of Iranians have demonstrated in defiance of a final warning by the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) that he would bring protests to an end with unprecedented force.</p> <p>Rallies were held on the streets on Sunday to protest against raids on student dormitories over the weekend in which students were taken away in buses to state detention. Some were sent text messages saying they were banned from campus indefinitely.</p> <p>Some of the crowds appeared to be the largest since the protests began more than five weeks ago over the death of the 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini while in police custody. Amini had been arrested by the “morality police” for allegedly breaching the Islamic republic’s strict dress code for women.</p> <p>Maj Gen Hossein Salami, the IRGC’s commander-in-chief, had warned on Saturday that that would be the last day of “riots”.</p> <p>The largest gathering was at the central Tehran branch of Islamic Azad University, but other protests occurred on the university’s North Tehran campus. Security forces responded by using teargas and firing pellet guns.</p> <p>Students at Qazvin International University chanted the slogan: “From Zahedan to Shiraz, I sacrifice my life for Iran.” At Mazandaran University, the crowds chanted: “If we do not stand together, we are killed one by one.”</p> <p>At some universities, students had dismantled partition walls in canteens put there to separate men and women.</p> <p>Restrictions on media access made it hard to judge the breadth of the protests, but they appeared larger and more defiant than ever. Supporters of the regime insisted only a small minority were protesting, but acknowledged they have continued far longer than they expected.</p> <p>The IRGC and the Basij, a paramilitary police force, were true to their word on Saturday, entering a number of campuses in an attempt to arrest students that they had on their lists, sometimes as many as 100. The security forces were also seeking the cooperation of authorities to lock the gates of universities and only let out those not listed for arrest.</p>

As part of the crackdown, authorities arrested the protest rapper Tomaj Salehi, releasing a photo of him blindfolded in the back of a car. They claimed he had been arrested as he tried to leave the country, a claim challenged by his family, who said he had been captured at his home in Bakhtiari province. The prosecutor accused him of “propaganda activity against the system”.

The new surge in protests has been prompted by emotional 40th-day commemorations of demonstrators killed in the initial wave of rallies, leaving Iran locked in a cycle of violence and dissent.

In a bid to quell protests, the IRGC buried the body of Reza Haghighatnejad, a well-known exiled journalist, away from his home town, fearing demonstrations if they allowed the family to go ahead with the burial. He had died in Berlin from cancer aged 45 and his relatives had had his body flown home. However, authorities seized the body at Shiraz airport and refused to hand it over to his family. Haghighatnejad’s sister posted on her Instagram account a photograph of the purported burial site outside the city of Shiraz.

“One person ... only one person should come and tell me where in history such cruelty has been inflicted to a sister,” she wrote.

More than 300 journalists have put their names to a letter demanding the release of two journalists who were among the first to report on the death of Amini. In their joint statement, they warned that “without free and responsible journalism, the society will not be able to identify and solve its problems”.

Niloofar Hamedei took a photo of Amini’s parents hugging each other in a Tehran hospital where their daughter was lying in a coma. Elaheh Mohammadi sent a vivid dispatch from the highly emotional funeral for Amini in her Kurdish home town of Saqqez. Both have been detained for more than 35 days.

Mehdi Rahmanian, the director of the Sharq newspaper where Hamedei works, issued a statement saying Hamedei’s reporting had been responsible and conducted in cooperation with him. He said she had not been the first to Amini’s death. Her husband denied that she had taken the photo of Amini in a coma on the hospital bed.

In an ominous statement on Friday, the IRGC intelligence department claimed Hamedei had been trained abroad by western intelligence agencies, a claim that was rejected.

The scale of the protests has left the regime veering from threats to promises of dialogue about why young people feel socially excluded.

The head of the Revolutionary Guards in the Khorasan Junubl province, Brig Gen Mohammadreza Mahdavi, was quoted by the state news agency Irna saying: “So far, Basijis have shown restraint and they have been patient.”

“But it will get out of our control if the situation continues.”

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HEADLINE	10/31 Russia launches strikes across Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-launches-barrage-of-strikes-across-ukraine-targeting-infrastructure-11667202215?mod=hp_lead_pos9
GIST	<p>Russian forces launched a barrage of strikes in Kyiv and across Ukraine on Monday that knocked out electricity and water supplies in parts of the country, as the Kremlin intensified its attacks on the country’s civilian infrastructure.</p> <p>Several loud explosions were heard in Kyiv shortly after 8 a.m. on Monday, during the morning rush hour. The capital’s mayor said the strikes severed the water supply in part of the city. Ukrainian officials said Russian missiles also disabled electricity grids in Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia in southeastern Ukraine and some central and western parts of the country.</p>

Ukraine's air defenses fired at incoming Russian missiles in Kyiv and other regions of the country, officials said. It couldn't immediately be determined how many Russian missiles struck their targets and how many were shot down.

The attacks were among the broadest in a series of barrages on Ukraine in recent months that have disrupted a period of relative calm that prevailed over central and western Ukraine for months after Russian forces abandoned their assault on the capital in April.

The strikes come after a drone attack on the occupied Black Sea port of Sevastopol on Saturday that Moscow blamed on Ukraine and the U.K.

Moscow said the wreckage from that attack proves it was mounted with British assistance, [a claim the U.K. denies](#). In response to the Saturday attack, Russia said it was suspending participation in an agreement that allowed Ukraine to resume its exports of grain via the Black Sea.

Recent attacks deep inside Ukraine, in areas far from the front lines in the country's east, have been part of the Kremlin's strategy to attempt to demoralize the general Ukrainian population, Kyiv says. Ukrainian forces in recent months have [reclaimed swaths of territory](#) that Russia had captured earlier in the invasion.

Monday's attack echoed a similar barrage that [Russia unleashed on Ukraine on Oct. 10](#), in which Russian missiles and drones swarmed the country, striking in the center of Kyiv and knocking out power to large parts of the country. That attack, which came in response to an attack on a bridge connecting Russia to Crimea in occupied Ukraine, also took place during Ukrainians' Monday morning commute.

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HEADLINE	10/30 Natural gas prices plunge into autumn
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/natural-gas-prices-have-plunged-into-autumn-11667084564?mod=hp_lista_pos3
GIST	<p>Natural-gas prices have fallen more than 40% since hitting shale-era highs in late August, reducing the risk of budget-busting heating bills this winter for millions of Americans and potentially easing a major cost pressure for manufacturers.</p> <p>The decline is due to warm autumn weather, record domestic production and gas-storage facilities that have filled up fast since the end of air-conditioning season. Now, one of the big drivers of inflation costs roughly the same as it did a year ago.</p> <p>Analysts warn that unusually cold weather could send prices soaring anew this winter, especially in the Northeast where maxed out pipelines have effectively capped output from Appalachia's prolific producers.</p> <p>Yet many are forecasting that prices will be lower on average in 2023 than they were this year. They expect rising supply from increasingly efficient North American drillers along with slower-growing demand from an economy throttled back by central bankers trying to slow inflation with higher borrowing costs.</p> <p>Natural-gas futures for December delivery ended Friday at \$5.684 per million British thermal units, just 4.75% higher than a year ago. Early last week, futures slipped below \$5 for the first time since March, when energy markets were jolted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Permian Basin producers in recent days swamped the Waha trading hub in West Texas, pushing prices into negative territory. In some cash trades, sellers paid buyers more than \$1 per million British thermal units to take away gas that was fetching more than \$8 at the start of September, according to S&P Global Commodity Insights.</p>

Analysts say futures prices are likely to rise a bit once furnaces fire up and a big liquefied-natural-gas export terminal in Texas resumes operations following [a fire this summer](#). But they expect prices to decline next year.

Goldman Sachs analysts forecast that benchmark U.S. prices would average \$5 per million British thermal units in 2023. BofA Securities anticipates \$4.50. Through Friday, natural-gas futures this year have averaged about \$6.60 per million British thermal units, straining not just household budgets but also the gas-consuming makers of materials ranging from steel and cement to plastic and [fertilizer](#).

Investors are betting on cheaper gas, too. Hedge funds and other speculators in recent weeks have built up their biggest collective wager that prices will fall since the panic selloff during the Covid lockdown in early 2020, Commodity Futures Trading Commission data show.

Rising natural-gas prices have been a safe bet since the early days of the pandemic. Some of the hottest weather on record stretched supplies at home and abroad, while the closure of [coal-fired power plants](#) left electricity producers without an alternative to natural gas. After Ukraine was invaded, European utilities and manufacturers bid up boatloads of shale gas to [replace Russian exports](#).

U.S. natural-gas inventories ended the past heating season drawn down to nearly 18% below normal levels. Another steamy summer, strong exports and restraint among North American drillers [focused on shoveling cash to their shareholders](#) kept domestic storage facilities from filling up much. By August, stockpiles were still nearly 13% below normal and [prices pushed above \\$10](#) for the first time since 2008, when the shale-drilling boom was [just getting started](#).

Mild weather in September meant a lot less gas burned to power air conditioners. Meanwhile, U.S. production [rose to a record](#) of more than 100 billion cubic feet a day and the prolonged outage at Freeport LNG's Texas export terminal made available a lot of gas that otherwise would have been sold overseas.

Traders began pumping more gas into storage tanks and caverns, socking it away for winter when demand is greatest.

Between Sept. 9 and Oct. 14, 571 billion cubic feet of gas were added to stockpiles, the biggest build ever over five weeks. The deficit to normal levels shrank by more than half. As of a week ago, the volume of gas in storage was within 5.5% of normal levels for this time of year, according to the Energy Information Administration.

Matthew Palmer, executive director of Global Gas at S&P Global Commodity Insights, said the firm expects U.S. inventories to fill even more and begin winter in line with recent years, at around 3.6 trillion cubic feet.

"That should be ample for most weather scenarios," he said. A really cold winter, however, like the frigid season of 2013-14, which sucked nearly 3 trillion cubic feet from storage, could push prices north of \$10, he said.

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HEADLINE	10/29 Bremerton's last public ER closed for good
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3687638/st-michaels-bremerton-no-reopening/
GIST	<p>A year after the St. Michael Medical Center emergency department in Bremerton closed its doors, hospital management says the facility will remain that way for good.</p> <p>This change means that the Silverdale St. Michael Medical Center will be the only ER and hospital in Kitsap County, other than the military hospital located on Naval Station Bremerton.</p> <p>The ER in Bremerton closed in summer 2021 at the height of the pandemic, when staffing shortages forced hospital management to combine forces under one roof at the larger Silverdale St. Michael Medical Center.</p>

“It did not make sense to duplicate resources at two separate locations,” said St. Michael President Chad Melton. “So we consolidated here to the Silverdale campus.”

At that point, parent company [Virginia Mason Franciscan Health](#) did not give an estimated date for reopening.

Now, hospital management has decided to keep the Bremerton site closed permanently.

“We have no plans to reopen that location,” Melton said.

Like hospitals around the state and the country, St. Michael’s is dealing with staffing shortages, and Melton said it still is working out a way to maximize everyone at one location.

“The one area in which we continue to have staffing challenges is around the emergency department ... the critical care areas are typically the most difficult to recruit into,” Melton said, explaining that the higher level of training required for these positions makes hiring a little tougher.

The plan now is to raze the Bremerton St. Michael’s building to the ground. Melton said demolition should begin by the end of the year, and take up to two years to complete. After that, the property will be sold.

The Bremerton facility’s 74 beds will be moved to the Silverdale St. Michael Medical Center.

Melton said they hope to be able to offer people in Bremerton another option next year at some point.

“We’re working on a plan right now to [open up a hybrid emergency department/urgent care in Bremerton](#) that supports our community there, and then looking at expansion opportunities here at the Silverdale campus,” Melton said.

The State Department of Health is investigating St. Michael’s after a cyberattack forced the hospital to take its electronic records system down for a couple of weeks earlier this month. Melton could not say how many people had to have medical appointments rescheduled during that time, but he said everything is up and running again smoothly.

“We have resumed our full operating room and imaging schedules. I’m just glad to say that we are back doing our normal course of business,” Melton said.

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HEADLINE	10/30 Recall: Foster Farms frozen chicken patties
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/usda-recalls-almost-150000-pounds-of-chicken-patties-some-sold-in-wa/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Department of Agriculture on Saturday announced the recall of roughly 148,000 pounds of Foster Farms fully cooked and frozen chicken breast patties that may be contaminated with pieces of hard plastic, according to a USDA news release issued Saturday.</p> <p>The contaminated breast patties were distributed to Costco distribution centers in Arizona, California, Colorado, Utah and Washington, and may have been distributed to other Costco retail locations, the news release said.</p> <p>The breast patties came in 80-ounce bags containing 20 pieces each and were labeled “CHICKEN PATTIES BREADED CHICKEN BREAST PATTIES WITH RIB MEAT” with a best-by date of “08/11/23” and establishment code P-33901, lot code 3*2223 and the number 7527899724 under the bar code.</p>

	<p>According to the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, there have not been any confirmed reports of injury as a result of the contamination, though FSIS believes some of the hard plastic pieces could be sharp and possibly cause injury.</p> <p>Anyone finding recalled product in their freezers should throw the package out, USDA said, while anyone with questions about the recall can contact Foster Farms' consumer hotline at 800-338-8051 or info@fosterfarms.com.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 WA Covid state of emergency orders end
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/washington-state-covid-emergency-orders-end/281-c0d41b70-9d47-42a4-b7f7-1e1e5bf4f782
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The remaining COVID-19 emergency orders, including the statewide state of emergency declaration, ends Monday, Oct. 31 after more than two years.</p> <p>Governor Jay Inslee announced last month the ending date for the remaining emergency orders. Nearly 75% of Inslee's 85 emergency orders were lifted before his announcement in September and an additional 13 healthcare-related orders ended last week. The state of emergency order was originally declared on Feb. 29, 2020.</p> <p>"Ending this order does not mean we take it less seriously or will lose focus on how this virus has changed the way we live. We will continue our commitments to the public's well-being, but simply through different tools that are now more appropriate for the era we've entered," Inslee said.</p> <p>The emergency orders ending Monday include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement • Safe Workers • Children and Youth Mental Health Crisis • Restrictions on Travelers • Safeguarding Public Trust and Stability in Local Health Jurisdictions • Public Records Act – Contact Tracing • Annual Leave and Pay Procedures • "WASHINGTON READY" • Higher Education • K-12 Schools • COVID-19 State of Emergency <p>Although the COVID-19 pandemic remains ongoing, the governor's office said it is no longer an emergency thanks to vaccination efforts, medical treatments and the mitigation efforts of Washingtonians.</p> <p>"While we are grateful for the thousands of lives we saved together, thousands of lives were also lost, and many more were changed forever," Inslee said. "The past two and a half years have been some of the hardest anyone can remember. Through the loss and suffering, we did not lose faith and we did not abandon each other. Working together, we saved countless thousands of lives."</p> <p>According to the governor's office, the emergency orders contributed to Washington state having one of the lowest COVID-19 death rates in the nation.</p> <p>The state currently has the sixth-lowest death rate nationwide, and all but two counties currently have low community transmission levels. Ferry and Pacific Counties have a community transmission level of Medium.</p> <p>"Governor Inslee's rescission of these remaining emergency orders marks an important transition for the state of Washington, but that does not mean that COVID-19 is not in our state anymore," said Secretary of</p>

	<p>Health Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH. "We must move forward from a pandemic response to adapting our behaviors to coexist with the COVID-19 virus."</p> <p>The DOH's masking order will continue in healthcare and long-term care facilities, as well as some correctional facilities. However, the DOH said it is actively reviewing and determining which situations they will continue to apply and plan to give another update in mid-Nov.</p> <p>Some workplace requirements will also remain in place. The Department of Labor & Industries will continue to require all employers to meet certain safety standards including keeping employees who have tested positive or are symptomatic away from the workplace for at least five days, providing PPE to those working with or near individuals with COVID, exposure notifications, anti-discrimination rules against high-risk workers seeking accommodations for COVID and protecting the option to wear masks in the workplace.</p> <p>In a briefing Thursday, DOH officials said only 15% of people over the age of 12 have received a Bivalent booster as of Oct. 24, which they called concerning.</p> <p>The DOH said cases have been trending down since mid-summer, but that people need to prepare for another possible wave this winter.</p> <p>You can find more information on the state's current COVID-19 cases on the DOH's website.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Officials: 2022 fire season fewer acres burn
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news-brief-newsletter/2022-fire-season-burns-fewer-acres-than-recent-years-dnr-washington-fire-officials-nakia-creek-public-lands-fighters-department-natural-resources#
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. — With the weather finally matching up to the calendar, fire restrictions have dropped for almost all districts in Oregon and Washington.</p> <p>The number of acres burned this year in the pacific northwest is significantly lower than in recent fire seasons.</p> <p>KATU News spoke with the Washington Department of Natural Resources about the agency's efforts to keep numbers low.</p> <p>Over the course of the last several years, fire season in the pacific northwest has become longer, and the area of vulnerability has only grown further.</p> <p>"For years now, we've had a very widespread across the state and across the Pacific Northwest," said Natalie Weber from the Oregon Department of Forestry. "It is impacting fire season, how we are seeing them and how long they are lasting.</p> <p>"Plan to recognize that our season now is largely April through October," said Hilary Franz, Washington Commissioner of Public Lands. "We have to be ready with not only the firefighters, but also the resources and equipment we need to fight them."</p> <p>Commissioner Franz said there are more DNR firefighters than ever before. More than 140 are working full-time, DNR is adding more seasonal workers, and they're training local fire districts to fight wildland flames.</p> <p>"Increasing the air resources, leveraging initial attacks, pre-positioning our equipment, having our equipment available for longer," Franz said. "And, also, increasing our firefighting capacity."</p> <p>Commissioner Franz said more than 140,000 acres burned in wildfires this year in Washington.</p>

	DNR reported the average over the last ten years is 470,000.
	2020 and 2021 were some of the worst fire seasons with 800,000 acres burned, according to DNR. 2015, about one million acres.
	These renewed efforts from DNR and its partners are to keep those numbers down and keep people safe.
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HEADLINE	10/30 Brazil ejects Bolsonaro, elects Lula da Silva
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/30/world/americas/lula-election-results-brazil-bolsonaro.html
GIST	<p>BRASÍLIA — Voters in Brazil on Sunday ousted President Jair Bolsonaro after just one term and elected the leftist former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to replace him, election officials said, a rebuke to Mr. Bolsonaro’s far-right movement and his divisive four years in office.</p> <p>The victory completes a stunning political revival for Mr. da Silva — from the presidency to prison and back — that had once seemed unthinkable. It also ends Mr. Bolsonaro’s turbulent time as the region’s most powerful leader. It was the first time an incumbent president failed to win re-election in the 34 years of Brazil’s modern democracy.</p> <p>For years, he attracted global attention for policies that accelerated the destruction of the Amazon rainforest and exacerbated the pandemic, which left nearly 700,000 dead in Brazil, while also becoming a major international figure of the far right for his brash attacks on the left, the media and Brazil’s democratic institutions.</p> <p>More recently, his efforts to undermine Brazil’s election system drew particular concern at home and abroad, as well as worldwide attention to Sunday’s vote as an important test for one of the world’s largest democracies.</p> <p>Without evidence, Mr. Bolsonaro criticized the nation’s electronic voting machines as rife with fraud and suggested he might not accept a loss, much like former President Donald J. Trump. Many of his supporters vowed to take to the streets at his command.</p> <p>Yet in the hours after the race was called, far-right lawmakers, conservative pundits and many of Mr. Bolsonaro’s supporters had recognized Mr. da Silva’s victory. By 11 p.m. local time, Mr. Bolsonaro had not spoken publicly.</p> <p>It was not all quiet. Truckers in the heart of Brazil’s central farming region started fires and tried to block a main highway important for the agriculture industry, according to videos posted on social media and local news reports.</p> <p>Mr. da Silva won with the narrowest margin of victory for that same period, signaling the deep divide that he will confront as president. He won 50.90 percent of the vote, versus Mr. Bolsonaro’s 49.10 percent, with 99.97 percent of the votes counted Sunday night.</p> <p>“I will govern for 215 million Brazilians, and not just for those who voted for me,” Mr. da Silva said in his victory speech Sunday night, reading from pages held by his new wife, whom he married this year. “There are not two Brazils. We are one country, one people, one great nation.”</p> <p>Mr. da Silva, 77, a former metalworker and union leader with a fifth-grade education, led Brazil during its boom in the first decade of the century, leaving office with an 80 percent approval rating.</p> <p>But years after he left office, the authorities revealed a vast government kickback scheme that had flourished during his administration. He was convicted on corruption charges and spent 580 days in prison.</p>

Last year, the Supreme Court threw out those convictions, ruling that the judge in his cases was biased, though he was never cleared of any wrongdoing. Still, he was allowed to run for president and voters rallied behind the man known simply as “Lula.”

The scandal made him a flawed candidate, and a sizable portion of Brazil still views Mr. da Silva as corrupt. But the strong opposition to Mr. Bolsonaro and his far-right movement was enough to carry Mr. da Silva back to the presidency.

“He’s not the solution to every problem. But he’s our only hope,” said Stefane Silva de Jesus, a 30-year-old librarian, after she cast her ballot for Mr. da Silva in Rio de Janeiro.

Mr. da Silva’s victory pushes Brazil back to the left, extending a string of leftist victories across Latin America that were fueled by a wave of anti-incumbent backlash. Six of the region’s seven largest countries have now elected leftist leaders since 2018.

A left-wing firebrand who for decades made his name as a champion of the poor, Mr. da Silva now confronts significant challenges. Brazil faces environmental threats, rising hunger, a sputtering economy and a deeply divided population.

His central pitch to voters was that he would lift up the working class, which he said had been forgotten in the four years under Mr. Bolsonaro. In his speech on Sunday, he promised to fight against discrimination and for equality.

“That’s the only way we’ll be able to build a country for all, an egalitarian Brazil whose priority is the people who need the most,” he said. “A Brazil with peace, democracy and opportunity.”

Mr. da Silva’s specific plans, however, have been vague.

His stump speech revolved around expanding services for the poor, including more social welfare payments, a higher minimum wage and programs to feed and house more people. To pay for it, he said, he would raise taxes on the rich but also simply increase government spending.

How much he will be able to get done is unclear.

Mr. Bolsonaro’s right-wing party holds the most seats in Congress and [a powerful centrist bloc](#) controls both the House and Senate; the country faces worse economic conditions than during Mr. da Silva’s first administration; and the interventionist policies of Mr. da Silva’s handpicked successor as president [led Brazil into a recession](#) in 2014 from which it has still not fully recovered.

His election, however, will most likely be good news for the health of the Amazon rainforest, which is vital to the fight against climate change. Mr. Bolsonaro championed industries that extract the forest’s resources while slashing funds and staffing for the agencies tasked with protecting it. As a result, deforestation soared during his administration.

Mr. da Silva has a much better track record on protecting the forest, reducing deforestation while president. He campaigned on a promise to eradicate illegal mining and logging and said he would push farmers to use areas of the forest that had already been cleared.

On Sunday, voting at polling stations went smoothly — but, for many voters, getting there did not. Across Brazil, federal highway agents stopped hundreds of buses carrying voters to the polls and questioned people, including in regions largely supportive of Mr. da Silva.

The elections chief said his agency’s initial investigation found that the stops had delayed the buses, but that they had all still reached their intended polling stations. No voters were blocked from casting their ballots, he said.

Mr. da Silva's victory was in part thanks to a broad coalition, from communists to centrists, as the Brazilian electorate sought stability after Mr. Bolsonaro's volatile term, which was marked by [clashes with the courts](#), a [pandemic](#) that [killed more people](#) than anywhere but the United States, and frequent attacks on the left, the media, academics, health professionals and the nation's democratic institutions.

Mr. Bolsonaro, 67, has faced a variety of investigations in the Supreme Court and Congress, including for his statements attacking the election system, [his handling of the pandemic](#) and his potential involvement in disinformation operations.

So far, he has avoided any consequences from those inquiries, in part because of his immunity as president. After he leaves office on Jan. 1, those investigations could gain steam.

Mr. Bolsonaro has also had much of his activity as president shielded from government-transparency laws because his administration effectively classified many records for up to 100 years, including his vaccine status.

Mr. da Silva has vowed to declassify those records once president. "When we lift the carpet, you're going to see the rot underneath," he said at Friday's debate.

Last year, Mr. Bolsonaro told his supporters there were only three outcomes to the election: He wins, he is killed or he is arrested. He then added, "Tell the bastards I'll never be arrested."

That sort of rhetoric raised alarms that Mr. Bolsonaro would not accept the results. He was one of the last world leaders to recognize President Biden's victory in 2020, repeating Mr. Trump's false claims that the election was stolen, including [just two days](#) before his first meeting with Mr. Biden earlier this year.

On Sunday, federal auditors inspected 601 polling stations to verify that their vote counts were accurately reflected in the national tally. The audit found no errors.

There is no credible evidence of fraud in Brazil's electronic voting machines since they were introduced in 1996. Yet Mr. Bolsonaro has questioned the system for years.

Earlier this year, his criticism of the system took on new gravity [when Brazil's military joined in](#). Leaders of the armed forces pushed election officials for changes to the system, rattling a country that suffered under a military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985.

But eventually military and election officials [agreed to a change to some tests](#) of the voting machines on Election Day, and military leaders have since suggested they are satisfied with the system's security.

In recent weeks, military leaders also said privately that they would not support any efforts by Mr. Bolsonaro to challenge the results.

In the week leading up to the election, Mr. Bolsonaro largely stopped talking about the voting machines and began claiming other kinds of fraud. His campaign said that many radio stations had played far more ads from Mr. da Silva, which would violate election laws. But the evidence the campaign produced was incomplete and flawed, and Brazil's elections chief quickly dismissed the complaint.

On Friday, in an interview after the final debate, Mr. Bolsonaro was asked directly whether he would accept the vote's results, regardless of outcome.

"There's no doubt," he said. "Whoever gets more votes, takes it. That's democracy."

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HEADLINE	10/31 India pedestrian bridge collapses; 140 killed
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/30/world/asia/india-bridge-collapse.html

NEW DELHI — At least 140 people were killed after a century-old pedestrian bridge collapsed in the western Indian state of Gujarat on Sunday evening, sending hundreds plunging into the Machchhu River, officials said.

About 350 people were on and around the bridge, a major tourist attraction, at the time of the collapse, said Brijesh Merja, a minister in the Gujarat government. A large number of those who died were children, women and older people, according to officials.

The bridge collapsed four days after it was reopened to the public and about seven months after the start of renovation work. Built in 1880, during the Victorian era, it is about 755 feet long.

[Video](#) broadcast by local television channels showed people swimming to a portion of the bridge suspended in the water, with more than a dozen struggling to cling to the edge as they waited to be rescued. Children and women could be heard crying for help.

Rescue workers scrambled to pull victims from the river. Video footage released by the Gujarat government showed [small boats](#) working through the night to help with the search and rescue, and pulling bodies out of the water. The office of the district collector in Morbi, the district where the bridge collapsed, said 170 people had been rescued.

The collector's office said that in addition to the national disaster response force, teams from the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force were on the way to help with the operation, which was complicated as night had fallen and the river was dark.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is from Gujarat and was in the state for a three-day visit, announced cash compensation for the families of those killed or injured.

"My heart is with the victims in Morbi," Mr. Modi said at a public event on Monday. "I have rarely felt this kind of pain in my life."

The bridge was particularly busy over the weekend, as the Hindu festival season drew a larger number of tourists and families to the recently reopened attraction. Local media reports suggested that the bridge was over capacity when it snapped. The Morbi district is home to thousands of factories that make ceramic tiles, bathroom products and wall clocks, and dozens of migrant factory workers were on the bridge when it fell.

Attention has shifted to whether the private company that runs the bridge and sells tickets for passages across it reopened the span to the public ahead of the holiday season without the proper safety checks. Municipality officials told the local news media that the bridge might have been opened without a "fitness certificate."

State officials said they would investigate the matter. Harsh Sanghavi, Gujarat's junior minister for home affairs, said criminal cases had been filed in relation to the collapse, without clarifying who was being booked.

India's infrastructure has long been marred by safety concerns. Allegations of corruption have also swirled around the huge amounts of money channeled to construction and maintenance, depriving Indians of quality roads and bridges and leading to frequent mass-casualty episodes.

Gujarat, which has a population of about 60 million, is in the middle of a harshly fought election season, with a vote for the local government expected in the coming months. Mr. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party has been at the helm of the state for the past two decades, and his 12 years as chief minister in Gujarat cemented his rise to national office.

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SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/pandemic-virus-hunters-pathogen-x-60-minutes-2022-10-30/
GIST	<p>An outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in Uganda has alarmed scientists. While no cases have yet been discovered outside Africa, the U.S. has started screening all arrivals from Uganda. Ebola is among the deadliest of pathogens capable of jumping from wild animals to humans—just as COVID-19 likely did. It's called spillover. Disease detectives warn the threat of spillover has never been higher as urban populations grow and come into contact with wild animals and their viruses. Since 2009, American scientists have discovered more than 900 new viruses. Now, the U.S. government is doubling down, sending virus hunters to global hotspots to find the next deadly virus before it finds us. We joined a team from the University of California Davis and their Ugandan partners in the rugged Impenetrable Forest on the search for Pathogen X.</p> <p>We landed in Kihhi, a speck of a town in southwest Uganda. As we headed off to the Impenetrable Forest, we soon saw how it got its name. It's so thick with trees, vines, and roots that Ugandans call it the place of darkness. As our 4x4s bumped and swerved along deeply rutted tracks, we passed tea farmers, loggers, villagers, all living on the edge of the forest, where the risk of infectious disease spilling over from animals is highest. Wildlife epidemiologist Christine Johnson handicapped the stakes.</p> <p>Bill Whitaker: How would you rate the odds of another pandemic?</p> <p>Christine Johnson: I would say another pandemic is guaranteed.</p> <p>Bill Whitaker: Guaranteed.</p> <p>Christine Johnson: It's not a matter of if, but when. That's why we're so committed to preparation.</p> <p>Johnson leads the UC Davis team and has been hunting viruses around the globe for decades. We were headed to an abandoned mineshaft to look for bats. Johnson told us bats are prime suspects for spillover. They harbor more viruses lethal to humans than any other mammal. New bat species—and new viruses—are still being discovered.</p> <p>Bill Whitaker: It seems like a really daunting task for you to find Pathogen X before it finds us?</p> <p>Christine Johnson: It's definitely achievable.</p> <p>Bill Whitaker: It is achievable.</p> <p>Christine Johnson: Absolutely. It's all here right now, right? It's not like we're exploring outer space. All of these viruses, and – and – and all of the wildlife are right here on our planet.</p> <p>The bats would start flying at dusk. We waited as the UC Davis team and their Ugandan partners hung a fine mesh net across the entrance of the cave. We wore masks and goggles to protect ourselves against any early risers.</p> <p>Benard Ssebide, one of Uganda's top wildlife vets, told us this area used to be all forest. Now, villagers had planted a cornfield right up to the mouth of the bat cave, increasing the risk of spillover. As if on cue, we watched women carrying water cut through the cornfield, while school children ran home.</p> <p>Bill Whitaker: The transfer between bats and humans, it's much more likely when you've got people living so close.</p> <p>Benard Ssebide: Exactly. The population has grown. People have moved into areas they've never aspired before. That shrinkage of the buffer, the habitat, between the people and wildlife has become so narrow, so that increases the contact.</p> <p>Bill Whitaker: We were talking about people who are now living right on the edge of the Impenetrable Forest.</p>

Benard Ssebide: Exactly. Governments cannot stop people from moving into some of these areas because they have nowhere else to go.

Bats are known to carry coronaviruses—the same virus family that spawned COVID-19—as well as lethal ebola viruses.

Christine Johnson: Make sure there's boots.

So we had to dress head to toe in protective gear. Once the hazmat suit was on, we added two sets of gloves, a mask, and a face shield to guard against flying guano and other toxins.

Bill Whitaker: Once we begin, I must assume everything is contaminated?

Christine Johnson: Exactly

The Impenetrable Forest was soon pitch black and we had only the light from our headlamps to guide us. Soon, they'd trapped a large egyptian fruit bat. Wildlife vet Benard Ssebide gently disentangled it and put it in a fabric sack. We followed him back to the makeshift lab, glowing in the dark.

The bat sacks quivered in the ghostly light. It felt like we were on the set of a sci-fi movie.

Bill Whitaker: Oh he's a big guy.

Up close, the bats did little to dispel their fearsome reputations. We watched as the fruit bat grew agitated, trying to escape. The scientists held its nose to a test tube filled with a mild anesthetic. Finally, the bat succumbed. Epidemiologist Christine Johnson told us the bat would be swabbed for a suite of viruses.

Bill Whitaker: Does this hurt the bat at all?

Christine Johnson: No, it doesn't hurt the bat. We—we get the right size swab so that we're just doing an oral sample. It might be a little uncomfortable.

The bat's wings were examined for parasites and ticks that might also have pathogens. All the samples would be sent to a lab for DNA sequencing. Johnson told us a virus's genetic code can help identify which might cross to humans.

After the tests were done, the bats were released, groggy but unharmed.

The next day we joined Tierra Smiley Evans, a UC Davis epidemiologist and wildlife vet. We were looking for monkeys and baboons. Like bats, primates carry many viruses that have leapt to people. Smiley Evans told us catching an outbreak early, at the point of spillover, is vital to containing it.

Bill Whitaker: It sounds like there's no shortage of viruses that can infect humans that come out of the forest?

Tierra Smiley Evans: There are probably more pathogens that we don't know about than ones that we do know about. We need to gather more information and more intelligence about what may be out there and able to spill over before it does.

Bill Whitaker: So they come right down to the hospital?

Tierra Smiley Evans: Yeah in the back, it butts up right against the forest.

We met her at the Bwindi Community Hospital on the edge of the forest.

Bill Whitaker: This really is something.

It's so close, we saw baboons casually strolling on the hospital grounds, sometimes getting into patients' rooms.

Tierra Smiley Evans: Whenever you're creating a new opportunity for humans to come in contact with wildlife populations that they were never in contact with before, you're creating a brand-new situation.

Bill Whitaker: So as human populations grow, that's pushing us into areas we've never been before.

Tierra Smiley Evans: Exactly.

Bill Whitaker: Putting us into contact with animals we've never been in contact with before.

Tierra Smiley Evans: Exactly.

To find out what viruses the baboons were carrying, Smiley Evans pioneered a simple but groundbreaking method to collect saliva samples: the stealth banana. Tied to a string, the banana is tossed to the curious baboons. But hidden inside is an oral swab coated in something sweet that the baboons love to chew. Smiley Evans and Ugandan wildlife vet Bukamba Nelson had prepared the bananas earlier in the day.

Tierra Smiley Evans: So we have tried strawberry jam. We have tried mango juice.

Bill Whitaker: Have you found they like one more than the other?

Tierra Smiley Evans: The difference is that sometimes they'll chew on that swab for longer periods of time with a different attractant versus another. And that's what we really want.

It's like bubble gum for primates. When the sweet is gone the baboons throw the swab away, leaving behind plenty of saliva that can be decoded for viruses.

But family politics can sometimes get in the way. Meet the big daddy of this troop. He wasn't about to let anyone else get even a mouthful. Mom hauled the babies out of the way until, finally, the coast was clear. By then, all that was left were soggy leftovers. Wildlife vet Bukamba Nelson told us it was worth the wait. It was rare to see babies venture this close.

Bill Whitaker: So you got saliva samples from the babies?

Bukamba Nelson: Yeah, yeah.

Bill Whitaker: That's unusual?

Bukamba Nelson: It's very unusual.

Bill Whitaker: So what do you get from the babies that you don't get from the adults?

Bukamba Nelson: You never know. I might find a particular disease in this age bracket, which might not be found in the juvenile or the females. Sex, age, all that plays a lot in disease intelligence.

Disease intelligence that also includes training villagers to be on the look-out for any unusual fevers or flu-like symptoms. Scientists can then match human illnesses to the animal viruses they've found in the same area. Smiley Evans told us it was putting pieces of a puzzle together.

Tierra Smiley Evans: All the samples are tested in the same way for the same pathogens. So, the goal is that if we're sampling at the same time, in the same area we can start to connect the dots and understand when there's been transmission of a particular virus.

One of the most closely monitored species in the Impenetrable Forest are its star residents, the endangered mountain gorilla. Nearly half the world's remaining gorillas are here, 459 at last count. They're always on the move, so we set off to find them. One ridge led to another, each steeper than the last. The forest was so dense there was no sunlight. And no gorillas. Wildlife vet Benard Ssebide assured us we were on the right path.

Bill Whitaker: Are you seeing signs of the gorillas around here?

Benard Ssebide: Yeah, I've seen some already.

Our porters breezed along unfazed. We? Not so much.

Then, hours after trekking, suddenly, there they were. We spotted a mother first, high in the trees gorging on twigs. Soon we were surrounded by all 19 members of an extended family, including a massive silverback and another mother cradling her infant. We had put on our masks, not to protect ourselves, but to protect the gorillas from any infection we might be carrying. Amy Bond is with Gorilla Doctors, an international conservation group. She told us how they identify each gorilla.

Amy Bond: Just like humans where we each have our own unique fingerprint that helps us be identifiable as an individual, gorillas have unique nose prints.

Bill Whitaker: A nose print?

Amy Bond: A nose print and that's what allows us to identify those individuals. And so we go through and we make sure we get each individual in the group that we can do a visual assessment, looking for signs of illness or injury.

Bond and wildlife vet Benard Ssebide told us that gorillas are susceptible to many of the same pathogens that we are and they can be an early harbinger of disease. The gorillas are monitored daily for any warning signs.

Amy Bond: When they're sick, it's very similar, right?

Benard Ssebide: Yeah

Amy Bond: Runny nose, coughing, sneezing

Benard Ssebide: Coughing, sneezing

Amy Bond: They're not moving, they don't want to eat.

If a gorilla is lying down, Ssebide told us, they'll assess if he's resting or if something else is preventing him from moving. We spotted one young male on his own, but Amy Bond told us he was likely suffering from a problem of a different sort.

Amy Bond: You can also sometimes tell which silverback is dominant by the number of females around him.

Bill Whitaker: So this poor guy sitting over here? (chuckles) He's just out.

Amy Bond: He's just always second choice.

Aside from a case of wounded male pride, Bond told us this family appeared to be thriving. But their future isn't guaranteed. And if theirs isn't, neither is ours. Bond told us as spillover threats grow, it's impossible to separate human health from the health of the natural world. As UC Davis scientists continue

	their work, the search for Pathogen X is a search for what threatens the animals of the impenetrable forest as much as it threatens us.
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HEADLINE	10/30 Air Marshals deployed to southern border
SOURCE	https://www.fedsmith.com/2022/10/30/massive-illegal-immigration-leads-deploying-air-marshals/
GIST	<p>Federal air marshals are now being sent to the Mexican border to work on immigration duties rather than working to provide security on airline flights at a time of heightened security concerns in air travel from terrorism.</p> <p>The deployment of the air marshals from their usual security duties comes as Customs and Border Protection has announced it has encountered more than two million migrants, some of whom repeatedly tried to cross the border in fiscal year 2022.</p> <p>The new data is a marked increase from fiscal year 2021 when there were more than 1.7 million encounters.</p> <p>In September, federal border authorities apprehended 77,302 migrants from Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. This is a 245% from September 2021.</p> <p>Increasing Risk of Terrorist Activity on Airlines</p> <p>The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) cited in an internal email the “immediate need” for more personnel on the Mexican border includes accepting “some risk” of depleted resources in aviation security. Federal air marshals (FAMs) typically fly in plain clothes on commercial flights and are on board the planes to prevent terror attacks.</p> <p>Federal air marshals are trained to protect commercial passenger flights by deterring and countering the risk of terrorist activity. The agency has described the duties of the air marshals on the border as “welfare checks, entry control, and transportation” of undocumented people who cross the border. It is not surprising that the trained aviation security specialists are not pleased with being deployed to the Mexican border for engaging in duties unrelated to the mission for which they were hired and trained.</p> <p>Initial Deployments to El Paso and Yuma</p> <p>The initial round of those deployed will be to El Paso, Texas, and Yuma, Arizona. 30 officers and a supervisor will go to El Paso, and 15 officers and a supervisor will go to Yuma. “There will be further deployments on TBD dates,” according to a memo sent to the air marshals. The memo also notes overtime pay is “highly likely.” The temporary assignments will consist of 21-day rotations and may be extended for up to 120 days.</p> <p>Coping With Multiple Emergencies Stressing Federal Workforce</p> <p>The administration is obviously trying to cope with several potential emergencies at the same time.</p> <p>The new directive for the FAMs was issued after the Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas issued a National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin. In that Bulletin, he noted: “the nation remains in a heightened threat environment.” He also wrote, “we expect the threat environment to become more dynamic,” specifically noting that the terrorist threat extended to “U.S. critical infrastructure” such as aviation.</p> <p>An organization called the Federal Security Council issued this comment on the deployments: <i>The dubious deployments of air marshals to the border while the DHS Secretary warns of additional attacks on the homeland is causing a revolt of sorts within the air marshal community. What’s compounding the issue is apparently not enough air marshals have volunteered for the border duty so the agency has threatened its workforce with termination if they don’t deploy.</i></p>

	<p>Judicial Watch obtained an internal memo sent to Federal Air Marshals. In what may be the first acknowledgment by the Biden administration about the border migration problem, the memo states: “The unprecedented volume of Noncitizen Migrants (NCMs) currently apprehended mandates immediate further action to protect the life and safety of federal personnel and noncitizens in CBP [Customs and Border Protection] custody. To support its mission, CBP is seeking federal employees from DHS Components and other federal agencies to be placed on reimbursable TDY assignments to assist in critical support functions.”</p> <p>The memo added that “LE/FAMS has been directed by DHS to support this request.”</p> <p>The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has previously declared a border emergency in order to lift the biweekly pay cap for federal employees.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Russia private army quantity over quality
SOURCE	https://www.newsweek.com/russias-private-wagner-group-army-choosing-numbers-over-quality-amid-struggles-1755632
GIST	<p>Russia's Wagner Group mercenary organization has lowered its standards to prioritize "numbers over experience or quality," according to U.K. officials.</p> <p>Earlier in October Ukrainian intelligence officials said the Wagner Group had started recruiting convicts with diseases including HIV and Hepatitis C. They added that Russia's private army were marking these soldiers with bracelets on their hands.</p> <p>Referencing the reports in its Sunday, October 30 update on the Ukraine war, the U.K. Ministry of Defence said the Wagner Group appears to have changed the way it recruits soldiers.</p> <p>It read: "On 27 October 2022, Russian mogul Yevgeny Prigozhin posted online, apparently admitting allegations that his private military company, the Wagner Group, had altered its standards and was recruiting Russian convicts suffering from serious diseases including HIV and Hepatitis C.</p> <p>"The role of the Wagner Group has evolved significantly since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In previous conflicts, it maintained relatively high recruitment standards, with many of its operators having previously served as professional Russian soldiers.</p> <p>"The admission of prisoners with serious medical concerns highlights an approach which now prioritizes numbers over experience or quality.</p> <p>"Prigozhin has recently discussed plans to create a 200km long defensive 'Wagner Line' in eastern Ukraine. This endeavor would require a large labor force.</p> <p>"There is a realistic possibility that some of the convict recruits will initially be put to work constructing the defenses."</p> <p>Ukrainian Defense Intelligence previously said the Wagner group had taken "more than a hundred prisoners" with confirmed HIV and hepatitis C from the No. 5 correctional colony near Metallostroy, in the Leningrad region of western Russia.</p> <p>It added: "In order to 'mark' infected militants, the command of 'Wagners' forces them to wear red bracelets on the arm in case of HIV and white bracelets in case of hepatitis.</p> <p>"Among other militants who are forced to serve alongside the infected, indignation at this situation is growing. It is known that Russian doctors systematically refuse to provide assistance to the wounded with hepatitis or HIV.</p>

	<p>"In Ukraine, captured militants with HIV and hepatitis have already been found, which confirms the information about mass "recruitment" of infected prisoners to PMC Wagner."</p> <p>Newsweek has contacted the Kremlin for comment.</p> <p>Earlier this month, a report found the Wagner Group had recruited 5,000 prisoners within the space of a week.</p> <p>Olga Romanova, head of the prisoner advocacy group Russia Behind Bars, said there were more than 20,000 Russian prisoners who had been sent to fight in Ukraine as Moscow struggles to fill a manpower hole following the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The Pentagon estimated in August that 80,000 Russian troops had been killed or injured in Ukraine since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his invasion in February.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Russia: Ukraine mobilization formally ends
SOURCE	https://www.npr.org/2022/10/28/1132229763/russia-ukraine-putin-russian-troops-military-draft-mobilization
GIST	<p>MOSCOW — Russia announced it was formally ending a controversial mobilization drive to send additional forces to fight in Ukraine — with Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu informing President Vladimir Putin in a televised meeting that the military had reached its target of 300,000 additional troops for the military campaign.</p> <p>"No further mobilization efforts are planned," Shoigu said, adding that 82,000 men had already been deployed to Ukraine while more than 210,000 were currently in training.</p> <p>Any future reinforcements, added Shoigu, would come from volunteers or professional contract soldiers in the army.</p> <p>In response, Putin asked his defense chief to pass on his gratitude to all who had joined the military campaign "to defend Russia, and with it your home, your family, our citizens and people."</p> <p>Putin announced the mobilization drive Sept. 21 as Russian troops were quickly losing territory they had seized in the previous seven months of war amid a surging Ukrainian counteroffensive.</p> <p>The timing of the announcement came as Russia rushed to hold a series of what it claimed were "referendums" — denounced by the West — for occupied territories to formally join the Russian Federation.</p> <p>Within days, the Kremlin announced it had formally annexed the territories from Ukraine — in many cases, including lands the Kremlin no longer controls.</p> <p>The Russian setbacks on the battlefield also invited rare public criticism of the military leadership by nationalists — normally Kremlin allies.</p> <p>Yet in announcing the drive, Putin insisted on calling it a "partial mobilization" — a semantic sleight of hand widely seen as an attempt to soften public outrage over a military campaign the Kremlin until then insisted was going "according to plan."</p> <p>Putin assured the public only men with relevant military experience would be enlisted, but reports emerged of authorities repeatedly grabbing up people with no training across the country.</p> <p>The announcement set off rare protests across the country — with more than 2,000 people detained based on draconian laws that criminalize criticism of the military.</p>

	<p>Russia's parliament quickly passed additional laws threatening those who refused draft orders with lengthy prison sentences.</p> <p>An estimated 700,000 Russians — most of them young men — fled to countries like Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Turkey in often desperate journeys to flee the draft. Prices soared or instantly sold out for plane tickets to other available visa-free destinations like Turkey and Armenia.</p> <p>The mobilization effort was also characterized by chaos — with mobilized troops and their families complaining of a lack of proper gear and minimal training before being sent to the battlefield. In some cases, Russian men with no military background were drafted while others were recruited against their will.</p> <p>In Moscow, authorities raided hostels where men were in hiding. In Saint Petersburg, recruitment officers stalked entrances to apartment buildings.</p> <p>Amid growing public outrage, Putin acknowledged there had been "mistakes" in the recruitment drive.</p> <p>Several dozen of the recently mobilized soldiers have already been reported killed in action — in some cases within days of arriving in Ukraine.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 US faces 'unpredictable' era of China's Xi
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/biden-taiwan-china-united-states-business-7a54612663d36b6223dfa9bbf20e4bdd
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's administration is taking stock of a newly empowered Xi Jinping as the Chinese president begins a third, norm-breaking five-year term as Communist Party leader. With U.S.-Chinese relations already fraught, concerns are growing in Washington that more difficult days may be ahead.</p> <p>Xi has amassed a measure of power over China's ruling party unseen since Mao Zedong, the leader from 1949 until his death in 1976. Xi's consolidation of power comes as the United States has updated its defense and national security strategies to reflect that China is now America's most potent military and economic adversary.</p> <p>Biden takes pride in having built rapport with Xi since first meeting him more than a decade ago, when they served as their countries' vice presidents. But Biden now faces, in Xi, a counterpart buoyed by a greater measure of power and determined to cement China's superpower status even while navigating strong economic and diplomatic headwinds.</p> <p>"We're not back in the Mao era. Xi Jinping is not Mao," said Jude Blanchette, chair of China studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "But we are definitely in new territory and unpredictable territory in terms of the stability and predictability of China's political system."</p> <p>Biden and Xi are expected to hold talks on the sidelines of next month's Group of 20 summit in Indonesia, a long-anticipated meeting that would come after nearly two years of tense relations. The leaders are dug into winning the upper hand in a competition that both believe will determine which country is the leading global economic and political force driving the next century.</p> <p>"There's an awful lot of issues for us to talk to China about," said National Security Council spokesman John Kirby. He added that U.S. and Chinese officials have been working to arrange a meeting of the leaders, though one has yet to be confirmed. "Some issues are fairly contentious and some should be collaborative," Kirby said.</p> <p>Biden and Xi traveled together in the U.S. and China in 2011 and 2012, and they have held five phone or video calls since Biden became president in January 2021. But the U.S.-China relationship has become far</p>

more complicated since those getting-to-know-you talks over meals in Washington and on the Tibetan plateau a decade ago.

As president, Biden has repeatedly taken China to task for human rights abuses against the [Uyghur people](#) and other ethnic minorities, Beijing's crackdowns on democracy activists in [Hong Kong](#), coercive trade practices, military provocations against self-ruled [Taiwan](#) and differences over Russia's prosecution of its war against Ukraine.

Xi's government has criticized the Biden administration's posture toward Taiwan — which Beijing looks eventually to unify with the communist mainland — as undermining China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Chinese president also has suggested that Washington wants to stifle Beijing's growing clout as it tries to overtake the U.S. as the world's largest economy.

“External attempts to suppress and contain China may escalate at any time,” Xi warned in his address before the Communist Party congress. “We must therefore be more mindful of potential dangers, be prepared to deal with worst-case scenarios, and be ready to withstand high winds, choppy waters and even dangerous storms.”

Dali Yang, a political scientist at the University of Chicago who researches Chinese politics, said there are some potentially stabilizing developments emerging in the relationship after months of rancor.

Two of China's best-known diplomats in Washington were elevated at the Communist Party meeting. Foreign Minister Wang Yi was selected for the Communist Party's Politburo, the policymaking body made up of the 24 most senior officials. China's ambassador to the U.S., Qin Gang, is joining its central committee. Their elevation should bring a measure of continuity to the U.S.-China relationship, Yang said.

Yang noted there has also been an effort on the part of the Communist Party leadership to “tone down its warm embrace of Russia.” Last month, after meeting with Xi on the sidelines of a summit in Uzbekistan, Russian President Vladimir Putin acknowledged that Xi had expressed “concern and questions” about the war in Ukraine.

With his third term confirmed, “in some ways, Xi is now freer to act and less encumbered in terms of no longer having to always watch what his rivals are doing,” Yang said. “I think that actually may affect his approach and may make him more comfortable in dealing with Biden.”

White House officials have played down hopes that Xi's new five-year hold on the Communist Party could give him breathing room to more fully engage on matters where China has some overlapping interests with the U.S.

Biden, during a meeting with Defense Department officials on Wednesday, stressed that the U.S. was “not seeking conflict” with China. Hours later, Chinese state television reported Xi told members of the national committee on U.S.-China relations that Beijing should find ways to work with Washington on issues of mutual concern.

The conciliatory moment was short-lived.

The following day, U.S. and Chinese officials were trading rhetorical shots about the U.S. move earlier this month to expand export controls on the sale of advanced semiconductor chips to China.

“The U.S. has overstretched the national security concept and suppressed China's development, and normal business cooperation has been politicized and weaponized,” Wang Hongxia, counselor at the Chinese Embassy in Washington, told reporters.

Her comments came not long after a top Commerce Department official, Undersecretary Alan Estevez, said at a Washington forum that “if I was a betting person, I would put down money” on the U.S. imposing additional export controls on China.

China's economy is slowing, with Beijing reporting this month that growth for the first nine months of the year was 3%, putting it on pace to fall well below its official full-year target of 5.5%. The country's economy is also dragging from strict "zero" COVID rules, and Beijing is confronting a deceleration in exports and home prices that fell to a seven-year low in September.

It also faces increased competition from a U.S. and European Union that are investing tens of billions of dollars to compete on semiconductors and other technologies. All of this points to the possibility that China might not eclipse U.S. gross domestic product by 2030 as many economists have forecast.

Ruchir Sharma, chairman of Rockefeller International, recently concluded that with its likely growth trajectory China would exceed the U.S. economy by 2060, if it manages to do so at all.

At the same time, Secretary of State Antony Blinken as well as the U.S. chief naval operations officer, Adm. Mike Gilday, have recently expressed concern that Beijing may try to step up its timeline to seize Taiwan. Blinken said China had made "a fundamental decision that the status quo was no longer acceptable."

China has largely refrained from criticizing Russia's war in Ukraine, but also has held off on supplying Moscow with arms. Still, the conflict has raised concerns in Taiwan that China — which has never controlled the island — might be further emboldened to move on its long-stated plan for unification.

U.S.-China tensions have been further enflamed by [House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's August visit to Taiwan](#) and Biden's remark in May that the [U.S. military would defend Taiwan](#) in case of an attack by China, comments the White House later played down.

"What's concerning now is that with Xi's unlimited power and ambition, he may use Taiwan to distract from his internal problems," said Keith Krach, a former undersecretary of state during the Trump administration. "I hope he's looked at the courage of the Ukrainians and reckoned that the people of Taiwan are just as courageous, perhaps even more so."

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HEADLINE	10/29 Russian troops losing will to fight?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/29/europe/russian-army-ukraine-blake-cec/index.html https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-invasion-ukraine-signs-unraveling/
GIST	<p>CNN — It was one of the strangest episodes in military history, an event so unusual that it was first treated as a myth.</p> <p>At 8:30 pm on Christmas Eve of 1914 in the dank and muddy battlefields of northern Europe during World War I, a British soldier dispatched a report to headquarters: German soldiers have illuminated their trenches and are singing carols while wishing British soldiers a merry Christmas.</p> <p>British officers ordered their men to be silent, but it was too late. A British soldier responded with his own chorus of "The First Noel." A German soldier called out across No Man's Land – the barbed wire-strewn, deadly middle ground separating the armies – "Come out, English soldier; come out there to us."</p> <p>The soldiers climbed out of their trenches and met in the middle. So did others, gathering to exchange chocolate, wine and souvenirs. They even organized a soccer game, which the Germans won 3-2.</p> <p>Most of the soldiers who shook hands on that fog-shrouded Christmas Eve would be dead before the war ended four years later. But letters from survivors and grainy black-and-white photographs prove it was no myth. An estimated 100,000 soldiers on both sides simply refused to fight because they were too exhausted and jaded. The Christmas Truce even lasted until New Year's in some places.</p>

“By December 1914, the men in the trenches were veterans, familiar enough with the realities of combat to have lost much of the idealism that they had carried into war in August, and most longed for an end to bloodshed,” according to an [account](#) of the Christmas Truce in Smithsonian Magazine.

More than a century later, there’s little chance that Russian and Ukrainian soldiers will shower each other with gifts this winter. But the Christmas Truce story is an example of a peculiar feature of war that offers a warning to the beleaguered Russian army in Ukraine:

There are moments throughout history where entire armies suddenly stop fighting, though they are evenly matched or even numerically superior to their enemy.

What causes armies to lose the will to fight? And how might that play out with the Russian army in Ukraine?

This is the question that CNN asked combat veterans and military historians. While history is full of embattled armies like the Imperial Japanese Army in World War II, which fought with ferocious intensity even though they knew they would not win, it also records other armies that “quiet quit” — stopped attacking the enemy or did the bare minimum to stay alive.

Russia’s troops may be approaching that precipice, says [Jeff McCausland](#), a combat veteran of the Gulf War and a visiting professor of international security studies at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania.

He says it’s become clear that the Russian army is poorly trained and supplied, and that its soldiers in many cases have lost their will to fight.

“Fear and panic are more infectious than Covid” for an army, says McCausland, co-author of [“Battle Tested! Gettysburg Leadership Lessons for 21st Century Leaders.”](#)

The sources for both fear and panic are varied. But McCausland and other historians say that throughout the history of warfare, there are at least three reasons why armies lose the will to fight.

They lose faith in their cause

McCausland has seen a broken army lose the will to fight up close.

He says he commanded a battalion during the Gulf War in 1990-1991 and saw so many Iraqi soldiers surrender that his unit had trouble accommodating the prisoners. They ended up giving water to the captured soldiers and pointing them toward the rear.

The war started when the Iraqi Army under Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. But many Iraqi soldiers simply didn’t think Kuwait or Iraq’s brutal leader were worth dying for.

“There was one instance where Iraqi soldiers [surrendered to a drone](#) that was circling over them,” McCausland says.

A more recent example of an army losing the will to fight came in Afghanistan.

Amid the US military’s withdrawal from the country in [2021](#), the Afghan National Army collapsed. They allowed the Taliban to quickly take control, even though the US had invested years and billions of dollars in training them. It was a low point for President Biden’s administration.

The reason for the Afghan army’s complex surrender could be distilled in one question, McCausland says.

“If you asked a Taliban soldier, ‘What the hell are you fighting for?’ he would say I’m fighting to free my country from the crusaders, just like my grandfather freed the country from the Soviets and my great-great grandfather freed the country from the British. And I’m fighting for my religion, my country and my home,” McCausland says.

And if the same question was asked of an Afghan army soldier?

“He would say I’m fighting for a paycheck—if the company commander doesn’t steal it.”

The Taliban believed in their cause; the Afghan army didn’t, says McCausland.

They lose faith in their leaders

Every war has its defining images. The Ukraine war has already yielded some unforgettable ones showing the contrast in leadership styles of Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelensky.

Recent photos of Putin typically show him attired in a suit, alone at the head of an [absurdly long conference](#) table, in a large, sterile room, with a general or bureaucrat cowering at the other end. The caption could well read: “paranoid and isolated dictator in action.”

Contrast those images of Putin with those of Zelensky. One shows him standing resolute with his circle of advisors at night in Kiev after vowing not to abandon the city even though he and his family were in danger. Other [photographs](#) show him in fatigues, buffed and bearded, swapping hugs with soldiers on the front lines.

McCausland, who is also a national security consultant for CBS radio and television, says the images offer a lesson in leadership.

“Just look at both photos in terms of who would you like to work for,” says McCausland, who offers leadership workshops to companies, non-profits and government institutions through his company, [Diamond6](#). “I don’t care whether you’re in the military or you’re working for a corporation. It’s pretty easy to decide.”

Armies lose the will to fight when they lose faith in their leaders, McCausland and others say.

They say soldiers don’t expect generals or other leaders to hunker down in frontline trenches with them. But they want to know if their leaders care for them and respect their sacrifice.

If you want to know how a leader can inspire an army to superhuman levels of endurance, consider this popular [story](#) from one of the greatest commanders in history: Alexander the Great.

Alexander was leading his parched army through an unforgiving desert in pursuit of an enemy when scouts returned to him with a scoop of precious water in a helmet. They handed him the helmet in front of his army.

Alexander thanked the soldiers and then, in full view of his troops, poured the water on the ground. He announced he would not take any water unless all his men had the same. His troops cheered.

Alexander the Great [never lost a battle](#).

“So extraordinary was the effect of this action that the water wasted by Alexander was as good as a drink for every man in the army,” one chronicler would [write](#) later.

They lose the backing of their country

We hear commentators warn about the dangers of hyper-polarization in American politics, the corrupting power of unregulated and virtually untraceable “dark money” and the breakdown of civic norms.

What many don’t say is that these trends can become a national security issue in times of war. Put simply, an army can quit when their country becomes too corrupt or divided to support them.

A classic example is the mass collapse of the South Vietnamese Army in the spring of 1975. The US military had been South Vietnam's big brother and benefactor for a decade as both countries fought the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese army.

But the South Vietnamese government was [riddled with corruption](#). Its leaders and their cronies siphoned off military aid to enrich themselves, and never built popular support among the populace they purportedly served.

After the US military withdrew combat troops in 1973, the North Vietnamese army launched its final offensive on Saigon two years later. The South Vietnamese army refused to fight. News photos from that period show the army's equipment littering roadways as soldiers abandoned their units and attempted to hide among the civilian population, says [Derek Frisby](#), a historian at Middle Tennessee State University.

"Once it looked like North was going to take over the South, there was nothing the South Vietnamese army could do about it," Frisby says. "Once the Americans left, it [the loss of South Vietnam] seemed inevitable."

Wars aren't just fought by soldiers. They are fought by a country, and its people and its institutions. They are what historian [Michael Butler](#) calls "social endeavors."

The health of a country's institutions - its government, military and media outlets - matter just as much as a soldier's will to fight, says Butler, author of ["Selling a 'Just' War: Framing Legitimacy and U.S. Military Intervention."](#)

Butler pointed to ["On War,"](#) the pioneering work by the 19th century Prussian military strategist [Carl von Clausewitz](#), who wrote that the "forces of passion" are every bit as critical to a successful war effort as the military and the government."

If a government is corrupt and does not have the trust of the people, its armies can lose the will to fight, Butler says. He says that appears to be taking place in Russia, where society has long been afflicted by a "societal malaise."

Its citizens have experienced the traumatic breakup of the Soviet Union, rampant corruption, political apathy, and the crushing of independent media and dissenting voices, he says. Political apathy has grown. The malaise afflicting civic Russia may be spreading to its military, he says, adding that the signs are already there in the thousands of men fleeing Russia to escape conscription.

"That's pretty compelling evidence that the forces of passion are not really effectively locked into this war," says Butler, a political science professor at Clark University in Massachusetts. "It's not surprising to see that playing out on the battlefield with troops who are deserting or disengaging."

The forces of passion now, though, seem to favor Ukraine. Its army's men and women (women soldiers serve in combat units in the Ukrainian military) know what they're fighting for.

"Ukrainians are motivated by perhaps the strongest force a soldier can have - defense of their country, families and homes," McCausland says.

The big question for Russian troops this winter

The US military faced a crisis of morale half a century ago in Vietnam.

American troops never surrendered during the Vietnam War. They never lost a major battle during the war. The 1968 Tet Offensive, a failed campaign by North Vietnam's army and the Viet Cong, was a [military victory](#) for the US.

And yet it was also a devastating political loss. The American public turned against the war. Antiwar protests rocked the country. The American public grew enraged when they learned their country's political and military leaders had [lied](#) to them about the purpose and success of the war.

Many American combat soldiers simply lost the will to fight. The US' abrupt withdrawal from Vietnam was one of the most humiliating chapters in our history.

The political context of the US's war in Vietnam was different than the current war in Ukraine. In Russia, war protests have been crushed and the media has largely been uncritical of Putin's conduct.

But on the battlefield, many Russian soldiers are discovering what some American soldiers realized in Vietnam — that they are fighting for a lie.

As John Kerry, a Vietnam combat veteran and future Senator who turned against the war, put it during a [1971 congressional hearing](#):

"How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

This is the question that may haunt Russian soldiers in Ukraine this winter. If Putin doesn't give them an answer that makes their hardships worthwhile, the mass migration of men fleeing Russia after conscription may spread to the battlefield.

And one frigid winter night, when the only sounds may not be of Christmas carols but of men dying on the battlefield, Russian soldiers may ask one another:

How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

There are more and more signs that Russia's invasion of [Ukraine](#) could be unraveling.

One of the most glaring setbacks in its war is its recent big call-up of more troops — a plan that doesn't appear to be working. Russia's mobilization has caused anger at home, forcing the old and inexperienced into uniform, with claims they're short of even basic equipment.

The call-up followed weeks of embarrassing setbacks for Russian forces, as Ukraine has retaken swaths of its territory. And in the Russian-occupied city of Kherson, officials appointed by Moscow have evacuated civilians ahead of another expected Ukrainian counter-offensive.

On Russian state TV, at times the tone seems close to despair. Russia miscalculated its strength and for eight straight months can't win in its war on Ukraine, said one commentator.

Perhaps another sign of Russian desperation is its new tactic: targeting the Ukrainian power grid, which has led to blackouts in Ukraine — but no collapse in morale.

As Russia's nuclear forces started annual drills this week, President Vladimir Putin repeated his government's allegation that Ukraine could detonate a radioactive device — a so-called "dirty bomb."

Some fear Russia is planning a false-flag operation, staging an incident and blaming Ukraine, perhaps as a pretext for using a nuclear weapon.

"I'm not guaranteeing you that it's a false flag operation yet, don't know," said President Joe Biden. "But it would be a serious, serious mistake."

Ukraine's defense minister told CBS News Russia is exhausted, and trying to force Ukraine and the West to negotiate.

	In a bizarre speech this week, Putin railed against the West, including gay pride parades and so-called cancel culture. But he also said that it would make no sense for Russia to use a nuclear weapon.
	Biden's response to that was: If he has no intention, why does he keep talking about it?
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HEADLINE	10/28 New global Covid wave in coming months?
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/scientists-fear-covid-variants-deadly-015437963.html
GIST	<p>The new COVID-19 subvariants that are becoming dominant all over the world aren't just more contagious than previous variants and subvariants—they might cause more severe disease, too.</p> <p>That's an ominous sign if, as experts predict, there's a new global wave of COVID in the coming months. It's one thing to weather a surge in infections that mostly results in mild disease. Cases go up but hospitalizations and deaths <i>don't</i>. But a surge in serious disease could lead to a surge in hospitalizations and deaths, too.</p> <p>It could be like 2020 or 2021, all over again. The big difference is that we now have easy access to safe and effective vaccines. And the vaccines still work, even against the new subvariants.</p> <p>A new study from The Ohio State University is the first red flag. A team led by Shan-Lu Liu, co-director of HSU's Viruses and Emerging Pathogens Program, modeled new SARS-CoV-2 subvariants including BQ.1 and its close cousin, BQ.1.1.</p> <p>The team confirmed what we already knew: BQ.1 and other new subvariants, most of them the offspring of the BA.4 and BA.5 forms of the Omicron variant, are highly contagious. And the same mutations that make them so transmissible also make them unrecognizable to the antibodies produced by monoclonal therapies, rendering those therapies useless.</p> <p>That should be reason enough to pay close attention as BQ.1 and its cousins outcompete BA.4 and BA.5 and become dominant in more countries and states. But then Liu and his teammates also checked the subvariants' "fusogenicity." That is, how well they fuse to our own cells. "Fusion between viral and cellular membrane is an important step of viral entry," Liu told The Daily Beast.</p> <p>In general, the greater the fusogenicity, the more severe the disease. Liu and his colleagues "observed increased cell-cell fusion in several new Omicron subvariants compared to their respective parental subvariants," they wrote in their study, which appeared online on Oct. 20 and is still under peer review at <i>New England Journal of Medicine</i>.</p> <p>If these new subvariants are indeed more transmissible <i>and</i> more severe, they could reverse an important trend as the COVID pandemic grinds toward its fourth year. The trend, so far, has for each successive major variant or subvariant to be more contagious but cause less severe disease.</p> <p>That trend, combined with widespread vaccination and new therapies, led to what scientists call a "decoupling" of infections and deaths. COVID cases occasionally spike as some new, highly-contagious new variant or subvariant becomes dominant. But because these new forms of SARS-CoV-2 cause less severe disease, deaths don't increase nearly as much.</p> <p>That decoupling, along with the availability of vaccines and therapies, has allowed most people all over the world to get back to some kind of normal in the past year or so. If BQ.1 or another highly fusogenic subvariant re-couples infections and deaths, that new normal could become a new nightmare. "More hospitalizations and deaths," is how Ali Mokdad, a professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington Institute for Health who was not involved in the OSU study, summed it up.</p>

It's possible we've already seen the first recoupling. Since the new subvariants began seriously competing for dominance in recent months, epidemiologists watched COVID statistics carefully in order to spot any real-world impacts.

[Singapore was a false flag.](#) The tiny Asian city-state had a quick, up-and-down surge in cases this month that some experts initially worried might involve a dangerous new subvariant. But the country's health ministry sequenced a lot of viral samples, fast, and determined that BA.5 was the culprit. Singapore's high rate of vaccination and boosting—92 percent of residents have their prime jabs and 80 percent are boosted—tamped down the BA.5 surge without a major spike in deaths.

But then there's Germany, where cases also surged this month. German authorities haven't yet determined which variant or subvariant is to blame, but it's worth noting that BQ.1 is spreading fast all over Europe.

And there are signs of recoupling in Germany. In October, the country registered as many as 175,000 new cases a day—matching the peak of the previous wave back in July. But 160 Germans died every day on average in the worst week of the current surge, whereas just 125 died per day in the worst week of the summer surge. “We could see the same patterns in other European countries... and in the U.S.,” Mokdad said.

There's still a lot we don't know about the latest COVID subvariants. And their real-world impact won't come into focus until we get good data out of Germany. “Close monitoring of new variants and studying their properties are critical,” Liu said.

But one thing is clear. For all their transmissibility and fusogenicity, the new subvariants *haven't* significantly escaped the immune effects of the leading vaccines. And the latest “bivalent” boosters, formulated specifically for BA.4 and BA.5, should maintain the vaccines' effectiveness as long as the dominant subvariants are closely related to Omicron.

Get vaccinated and stay current on your boosters. It's impossible to stress this too much. Yes, BQ.1 and its cousins exhibit some alarming qualities that could bend the arc of the pandemic back toward widespread death and disruption.

But only if you're unvaccinated or way behind on your boosters.

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HEADLINE	10/30 Russia's hobbled auto industry struggles
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-auto-cars-lada-reboot-air-bags-11667141126?mod=hp_lead_pos10
GIST	<p>Western sanctions brought Russia's car industry to a screeching halt earlier this year. As it restarts, it is emerging smaller, technologically backward and more isolated—a foreshadowing of what could be in store for the rest of the embattled Russian economy.</p> <p>Within weeks of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, most Western car companies curtailed operations in the country. Sanctions cut off the supply of parts and, one after another, Russian car plants stopped production. By May, car production was down 97% compared with a year ago.</p> <p>Some Russian plants are now reopening, including under new, local management. Last month, AvtoVAZ, maker of the iconic Russian Lada brand, said it planned to make 500,000 vehicles next year. In 2021, the company sold nearly 400,000 cars.</p> <p>But the industry restart featured cars that were a far cry from prewar models, lacking air bags, anti-lock braking-system sensors or electronic stability-control technology, an industry standard.</p> <p>Lada has slowly been adding the features back as it manages to develop them locally or source from abroad. It now produces cars with air bags and the company plans to add anti-lock brake systems next year and electronic stability control by 2024.</p>

“Such key factors of a modern car as an automatic transmission, four-wheel drive and a modern engine—of course, these are possible, but these tasks can’t be solved quickly and require serious funding,” Maxim Sokolov, the chief executive of AvtoVAZ, said in September, according to state newswire TASS.

A spokesman for AvtoVAZ, the maker of Lada, declined to comment for this article.

The auto industry is shaping up to be an early test case for how successfully Russian industry can recover from the greatest shock to the country’s economy since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The government has pumped money into the sector, but there is only so much manufacturers can buy amid sanctions and near-economic isolation from the West, which for decades has provided Russian car makers with technology, investment and management.

Russian industry executives are scouring other countries for missing Western components or trying to produce them at home, a process that can take years to master. Meanwhile, they are producing cars partly based on designs decades old.

“If you listen to official statements, we are now rebuilding the car industry and making it something else,” Evgeny Eskov, editor in chief of the Moscow-based AutoBusinessReview, said in an interview. “But what that would be remains unclear.”

The bumpy restart mirrors that of the broader Russian economy, which suffered an immediate shock after sanctions were introduced but has since stabilized at a lower gear. The war is nevertheless undoing decades of Western investment and know-how, heralding a period of adjustment ahead across industries.

“The impact on the industry will be indicative of what awaits other sectors of the Russian economy: less technologically advanced products, poorer quality and a limited variety of goods,” said Maria Shagina, research fellow at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

The Kremlin declined to comment on the state of the car industry or the economy, referring questions to the Russian Ministry of Industry and Trade. The ministry didn’t respond to a request for comment.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has acknowledged the impact of sanctions but said the Russian economy was able to cope, and it will emerge stronger thanks to government measures.

“The overall situation is quite stable,” Mr. Putin said at a government meeting this month. “It is important to understand that the sanctions pressure on Russia will only increase. We need to have flexible, effective action plans for the short and medium term, and we need to implement them consistently.”

So far, Moscow has been able to cushion the blow of sanctions for everyday Russians thanks to a windfall from high-price energy exports. Russia’s current-account surplus, a broad measure of its foreign trade, more than doubled in the first nine months of the year to over \$198 billion and is on track to finish the year at a record. That has allowed Moscow to infuse the economy with stimulus cash. The ruble has stabilized after an initial sharp drop in the days after the invasion began.

While forecasts have improved in recent months, economists still predict the recession will be deep and could spill into next year.

The lack of items ranging from computer chips to oil-drilling equipment has hobbled domestic industries. Falling oil prices have hit Russia’s revenue. The country’s budget was in deficit in September, and its annual surplus is narrowing. Mr. Putin last month kicked off a partial mobilization of fighting-age men, which analysts say could disrupt many companies’ workforces.

Massive energy developments have been put on hold while Russian manufacturers are struggling to make basic appliances: Washing-machine production dropped from nearly 600,000 units a month in December

to just over 100,000 in May. Like autos, washing-machine production is slowly recovering and was 190,000 in August.

“External circumstances have changed for a long time, if not forever,” Elvira Nabiullina, the governor of Russia’s central bank, said in June. Analysts at the bank have called the new reality “reverse industrialization,” suggesting economic growth based on less-sophisticated technology and industry.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the car industry. Once seen as a key plank in Russia’s efforts to diversify away from its reliance on commodity exports, before the war it employed some 300,000 people directly. Another 3.5 million work in related industries, or around 5% of the labor force. Russia produced motor vehicles and parts worth 2.6 trillion rubles, or around \$42 billion, in 2020, the equivalent of around 2.4% of gross domestic product, according to official statistics.

Car making mostly relies on complex global supply chains and just-in-time logistics. Western sanctions cut off Russia’s access to technologies such as computer chips that are needed to operate modern vehicles.

Another missing ingredient: customers. In May, as Russian inflation jumped and incomes stagnated, new car sales slumped by 83.5% compared with the same month last year, according to the Moscow-based Association of European Businesses. The recovery has been slow, with September recording a 60% drop.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, where cars were often a luxury for the elite, owning a car became a standard attribute of middle-class life. The number of passenger cars more than doubled in the past two decades. In 2018, Russia had 328 cars per 1,000 people compared with around 406 in the U.S., according to data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The current crisis is putting that success story to the test.

On Feb. 22, Lada executives traveled to the Russian city of Izhevsk to unveil a major upgrade of the Vesta model. Renault SA, the French automotive giant and owner of Lada-maker AvtoVAZ, had bet big on Russia, at the time its biggest market outside France.

The new model included blind-spot monitoring sensors, a smart-parking assist system and LED headlights.

Two days later, Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine.

Within days, Western sanctions began to hit Lada’s supply of parts such as fuel injectors, anti-lock braking systems and air-bag modules, according to people familiar with the events who recounted the days of chaos after the invasion. As it exhausted its stocks, Lada began to run assembly lines at slower speeds, and only on certain days.

At Lada’s headquarters, thousands of employees switched their focus from designing the next generation of cars to re-engineering existing ones, without parts that couldn’t be sourced because of sanctions. Engineers trying to rewire Lada models worked from old designs.

Purchasing managers urged local suppliers, some of which had been selling only spare parts to Lada, to increase their volumes to make up for supply lost from Western sources.

“It was a massive refocus,” said one person familiar with the effort inside Lada. “The company was working only on this.”

Lada employees drew up lists of parts they could no longer get from the West. Anti-lock braking systems, for example, were supplied by German engineering group Robert Bosch GmbH, people familiar with the matter said. “Against the backdrop of sanctions, Bosch stopped deliveries of vehicle components such as anti-lock braking systems to Russia at the start of the conflict and subsequently also to Russian customers,” a Bosch spokeswoman said.

Lada turned instead to Chinese suppliers, but the Chinese versions aren't expected until next year, the people said.

As Lada employees strained to redesign cars, executives in France at parent company Renault explored ways to leave the country. Paying staff costs while not being able to sell any cars was costing Renault's Russian subsidiary tens of millions of euros a month at a time it was already low on cash, people familiar with the matter said. As it became clear the war would drag on, finding a way to leave became an imperative.

A Renault spokesman declined to comment.

Ultimately, Renault and the Russian state reached a deal in May: the French car maker would hand over its stake in the Lada-maker AvtoVAZ to a state-backed entity for one symbolic ruble. It also gave its factory in central of Moscow to another state-backed entity for a second ruble.

A statement from Renault at the time said "We have taken a difficult but necessary decision; and we are making a responsible choice towards our 45,000 employees in Russia, while preserving the Group's performance and our ability to return to the country in the future, in a different context." The deal includes a six-year option for Renault to buy back its shares.

The Russian government officially moved to relax regulation, allowing cars produced in the country to be sold without some safety and technological features. Air pollution standards were also eased.

In June, the Russian government pledged publicly to inject around half-a-billion dollars this year to boost domestic production of car parts. That same month, the no-air-bags variant of the popular Lada Granta model rolled off the production line.

Lada called it the "Classic '22." Commentators on state television called it the "anti-sanctions Lada."

"It is a brutal car...without almost any technology," said Mr. Eskov, the editor in chief of AutoBusinessReview.

Meanwhile, plants producing Western brands kept their production lines idle. In Kaliningrad, a factory which once assembled Chevrolets and BMWs handed out farmland to workers facing furlough so they could plant potatoes.

In July, the trade union of workers at the plant in Russia that had been due to produce the upgraded Lada Vesta wrote a letter to Mr. Putin, complaining they had been idle for months and "highly qualified specialists paint the walls, mow the grass, pick up the garbage...to earn a fair wage."

In their letter, workers said the plant couldn't restart due to the lack of components. "At the moment, Russia's best car is only 40% Russian. The rest used to be imported from abroad," the workers said.

In August, Lada began adding either one or two air bags back into its low-cost Granta cars, one of the models it had redesigned to do without parts it couldn't source because of sanctions. It continues to offer versions of the car with no air bags on its website.

To resume production of cars with anti-lock brake systems next year and electronic stability control by 2024, the company will need to develop its own homegrown technological capability. The development of an automatic transmission will cost about 30 billion rubles, while creating an all-wheel drive system for cars will cost another 20 billion rubles, Mr. Sokolov, the chief executive of AvtoVAZ, said in September, according to state newswire TASS.

The exodus of Western car makers could help Chinese manufacturers expand in the country, mirroring the Russian economy's growing dependence on China. Sales of Chinese brand Haval, which specializes in SUVs, were up 26% in August from last year.

	<p>The restart of Russia’s car industry has proven divisive among consumers, too.</p> <p>Anastasia Milanovskaya, 26, a car enthusiast who fixes up old Lada models in her spare time, said she wouldn’t buy a new Russian-made car, though she acknowledged others like them.</p> <p>“You do still see Russian cars on the road, people are still buying them,” Ms. Milanovskaya, a director of a lingerie store, said. But, she said, the Russian car industry “is just not the same anymore. The new cars lack the quality that you would have got in the past.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Halloween tragedy mostly young revelers
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/south-korea-halloween-tragedy-claims-mostly-young-revelers-11667133329?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>SEOUL—In a narrow alleyway in Seoul’s lively club district, Halloween revelers were packed together so tightly that no one could move. People shouted to go forward. Others screamed to push back.</p> <p>Within moments late Saturday night, they began to fall like dominoes, as the crowd began collapsing on itself down the sloped side street. Hundreds of people got crushed, creating a human pile that stacked higher and higher.</p> <p>At least 154 people were killed in the Itaewon district, as a night that started with a celebratory atmosphere for the first Halloween without most Covid-19 restrictions turned into one of the country’s worst tragedies. Most of the victims were young. Many were female, authorities said. Some 132 others suffered injuries, with at least 36 in critical condition on Sunday, authorities said.</p> <p>Police said they are investigating whether the businesses and local authorities took proper safety precautions. They haven’t said what might have caused the crowd to fall.</p> <p>Crowd-control experts said, based on reports of the incident, that authorities didn’t appear to have sufficient measures in place to safely manage such a large mass of people.</p> <p>Kim Ji-ae, a 26-year-old Pilates instructor, walked near the accident scene on Saturday night. She had been en route to take photos of herself at a hotel in Itaewon, dressed as a hotel guest with a bathrobe and her hair tied up with a white towel. Bodies stretched several blocks—probably more than 100, she estimated.</p> <p>Her friend lent an emergency responder her red lipstick, which was used to mark the stomachs of those who had died so that they could focus on survivors. Before leaving the area, she removed the white towel she had worn as part of her costume and covered up one of the marked bodies.</p> <p>“I can’t forget his pale face,” Ms. Kim said.</p> <p>South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol called the deaths a truly horrific incident and a disaster that should have never happened. The government will provide financial assistance to those injured and families of the deceased. A national mourning period will run through Saturday with a special venue set up in downtown Seoul to allow people to pay tribute to the victims.</p> <p>“We will thoroughly investigate the cause of the accident and take measures to ensure a similar accident does not occur again in the future,” Mr. Yoon said.</p> <p>World leaders including President Biden, Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida expressed condolences. Mr. Kishida said he was shocked at the tragic accident, while British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak described the news as horrific.</p>

Among the dead, 98 were women and 56 were men, authorities said. Not all of the victims have been identified, prompting Twitter Inc. and South Korea's two largest internet platforms to ask users to refrain from spreading video footage and unverified information.

Witnesses described a surreal scene, where some said they initially thought the first responders and bodies covered in blue sheets were Halloween-inspired theater. Itaewon—which was until a few years ago the longtime home to the U.S. military presence in South Korea—sits in the center of Seoul and ranks among the city's most-popular destinations for locals and tourists.

The tragedy likely resulted from poor crowd control, experts said, raising questions over how South Korean authorities had regulated the mass numbers who flocked to the district to celebrate the first Halloween following the relaxation of most of the country's Covid-19 restrictions. Officials had estimated that turnout could reach 100,000.

Local police had dispatched around 200 personnel to contend with the influx of Itaewon visitors. But much of the law-enforcement presence was tasked with investigating drug or sex-related crimes, not crowd management, according to a press release on Thursday from the Yongsan Police Station, whose jurisdiction includes Itaewon.

During a briefing early Sunday morning, Choi Eul-cheon, who heads the criminal division for the Yongsan Police Station, was asked whether the police had taken crowd-control measures before the accident, and about the details of how its forces had been stationed across the neighborhood. Mr. Choi said he wasn't in a position to answer.

The first emergency call came in at 10:15 p.m. Saturday. Emergency responders arrived at the scene two minutes later. But the officials struggled to parse through the sea of people.

The police and firefighters didn't have enough personnel to handle the hundreds of victims, witnesses said. Many at the scene assisted first responders by moving bodies to the main street and performing CPR themselves. Some began live streaming the situation on social media, as the witnesses said people shouted, "Please pull my friend out!" or, "Please save me!"

Walking out of a club near the accident site around 11:30 p.m., Lee Tae-hoon, a 23-year-old university student visiting from Canada, heard a busy firefighter ask if anyone knew how to perform CPR. A former lifeguard, he stepped forward. He tried to resuscitate a young woman. After a few minutes, the firefighter said the woman had shown no signs of life.

Throughout the evening, Mr. Lee said he hadn't encountered much law enforcement except for the occasional police officer directing traffic. He had bounced around different Itaewon bars and clubs since around 6:30 p.m. The area had been packed, and he recalled how the crowd had lifted him forward even as he stood still.

"I could totally imagine how some people could get crushed to death," Mr. Lee said.

Zen Ogren, a 32-year-old university student from Turkey, and her two friends were at a nightclub located in the basement of a building right by the alleyway where the deadly accident had unfolded. Around 10:30 p.m., Ms. Ogren went up to the first floor, which houses a restaurant, to get some fresh air. Outside, she saw people were stacked on top of each other—many lifeless, some with broken legs and disfigured faces.

She heard people plead for others not to push, and she believed catastrophe could have been avoided if people just stood in their places. "I really don't understand," said Ms. Ogren, who lives in Itaewon.

The roughly 150-foot walk down the narrow Itaewon alleyway would typically take under a minute. On Saturday night it became clogged with partygoers who inched toward the main street that runs through Itaewon and feeds to the subway station.

That most people were walking down the sloped side street likely worsened matters, crowd-control experts said. As people up front fell or tripped, the masses in the back would have seen what appeared to have been an opening. Any push forward would have caused even more people in front to topple over one another.

Unable to breathe, most of those trapped under a growing pile of people—or even those standing up though sandwiched between others—would have up to 15 seconds before passing out. After that, a typical person would have just five or six minutes to survive without blood flowing to the brain.

“Beyond that your chances of surviving are remote,” said Stan Kephart, an expert on police and security practices, who often provides expert testimony on the topic.

Paul Wertheimer, a crowd-safety expert who heads the California-based Crowd Management Strategies, wonders if local authorities had anticipated bigger-than-expected numbers showing up in Itaewon, given how Covid-19 restrictions had created pent-up demand from partygoers and businesses alike.

Law enforcement should have been managing access to the alleyway, almost as if they were nightclub bouncers, Mr. Wertheimer said. “Why does this happen? Too many people in a small space,” he said.

On Sunday afternoon, Itaewon had largely emptied out, with the main road blocked off with yellow barricade tape and police buses lining the streets. Police guarded the funeral hall at the nearest hospital from the Itaewon subway station. At the alleyway, people had placed on the ground bouquets of yellow and white chrysanthemums—flowers traditionally used at South Korean funerals. One person left a note with their offering: “I hope you achieve your dreams in a better world,” it read, addressed to no one in particular.

Lee Sang-won closed his cafe near the accident site early, at around 2 p.m., struggling to reckon with the tragedy.

“People died in these streets just yesterday and I can’t get the image out of my head,” he said.

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HEADLINE	10/28 CDC: subvariants BQ.1.1, BQ.1 spreading
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-10-28/cdc-omicron-subvariants-bq-1-1-bq-1-spreading
GIST	<p>Omicron subvariants BQ.1.1 and BQ.1 are spreading, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>The subvariants, which are offshoots of BA.5, were responsible for a total of 27% of infections this week, according to CDC’s weekly variant estimate update. That’s up from just 9% of COVID-19 cases two weeks ago.</p> <p>As the pair continues to spread, the prevalence of BA.5 falls. This week, it was responsible for less than 50% of infections – the lowest percentage reported in nearly four months.</p> <p>The White House has been pushing Americans to get an updated COVID-19 booster shot that targets the omicron variant by Halloween in the hopes of lessening any potential fall and winter coronavirus wave.</p> <p>But two recent studies have raised questions about just how effective those shots will be, though neither study has been peer-reviewed yet.</p> <p>The first study concluded that there was “no significant difference” in the neutralization of any coronavirus variants in people who got a fourth dose of the original vaccine compared to the updated shot.</p>

	<p>The other study found a "modest and nonsignificant" improvement in BA.5-fighting antibodies from the updated booster shot compared to the original formula.</p> <p>Despite the studies, the White House has defended the shots. In fact, Ashish Jha, the White House COVID-19 response coordinator, said that he was not surprised by the research. He said that trials from Moderna and Pfizer with larger sample sizes should turn up a more sizable antibody response.</p> <p>"I do think that the protection against infection is going to be better than if you were getting the original prototype booster," Jha told CBS News.</p> <p>Both Pfizer and Moderna have reported positive early data on their updated shots and expect more data in the coming weeks and months.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Spokane Camp Hope center political storm
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/10/spokanes-camp-hope-center-political-storm
GIST	<p>As chairman of the East Central Neighborhood Council, Randy McGlenn II is the Spokane neighborhood's most prominent advocate.</p> <p>After living there for nearly two decades, McGlenn believes the community has been thriving and still has a lot of potential for future growth.</p> <p>While many think of the neighborhood alongside Interstate 90 as low-income, the area has attracted residents across a variety of income levels. It's a melting pot of Latine, Black and Pacific Islander communities. Many small businesses have opened shops, bringing additional dollars to the area.</p> <p>But what most people think of when they consider the East Central neighborhood these days is a homeless camp occupying several square blocks, with nearly 450 people living in tents.</p> <p>Camp Hope, the largest such encampment in the state, has become the face of Spokane County's rapidly growing housing and homelessness problem.</p> <p>In recent months, Spokane city and county leaders have been squabbling with the state agencies over its future. All claim they have been trying to work with each other and service providers to help the residents find permanent housing, but the arguments have captured a lot of the energy in the discussion.</p> <p>Local government leaders, including Mayor Nadine Woodward and Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich, have declared the encampment a nuisance and are working to clear it within the next few weeks.</p> <p>Meanwhile, leaders from the state agencies, including the Department of Transportation — owners the property on which Camp Hope sits — are not mincing words on their concern over the city and county's actions.</p> <p>Clearing out Camp Hope prematurely "will simply force the most vulnerable to relocate to other city, county, state and private [-ly owned] property within the area. Acting on the city's ill-considered demand solves nothing for anyone," Transportation Secretary Roger Millar, Commerce Secretary Lisa Brown and Washington State Patrol Chief John Batiste wrote in a Sept. 20 letter to Johnnie Perkins, city administrator for Spokane.</p> <p>Those in the neighborhood feel caught in the middle, said McGlenn, who moved out of the area a year ago but still runs his computer business there.</p> <p>The encampment has hurt the neighborhood — namely, in declining business activity, as residents and visitors express safety concerns over the encampment's presence, McGlenn said.</p>

But McGlenn said while there is strong support from some neighbors and the business community to clear out the encampment, others believe that is not a perfect solution either, especially if it means Camp Hope's residents disperse to other neighborhoods around the city.

He also doesn't like local officials' lack of will to get past political arguments and do the hard work of crafting solutions.

"I know the neighborhood wants the camp gone and addressed swiftly, but we're not addressing it swiftly unless we address why these folks are homeless," McGlenn said.

Spokane County's growing housing unaffordability

According to a point-in-time count by the City of Spokane in late February, the county now has 1,757 homeless residents. The figure is a rough estimate, and many advocates for the unhoused believe the actual number is likely higher.

Still, the count does point to a sharp rise in homelessness — the count was in the 1,000-to-1,200 range between 2009 and 2017.

Those overseeing homelessness data in Spokane's Community, Housing & Human Services Department [noticed a concerning correlation](#): the rise in homelessness in Spokane County as a whole due to a rapid decline in housing affordability.

For much of the previous decade, Spokane County was well above 100 on the housing-affordability index, indicative of strong housing affordability. At specific points, it was upward of 200. But it has since fallen to below 100 this year.

Figures from the Washington Center for Real Estate Research shows the average rent for [all apartments was nearly \\$1,300 a month](#) as of the third quarter of 2022. That's a whopping 51% increase from just \$853 a month [during the same period in 2016](#).

Not only is housing more expensive in Spokane, but it has become more challenging to find. According to figures from the Washington Center for Real Estate Research, the apartment vacancy rate for Spokane was as low as 1.6% in the fall of 2016; it has since increased but remains at just [3.7% as of the third quarter of this year](#).

So perhaps it's not a surprise that a supermajority of homeless people in Spokane County — contrary to the standard narrative — are from the area. County data shows that 74% of those surveyed had been living in the county when they became unhoused. And 58% of homeless residents have lived in the Spokane area for at least a decade.

Shelter bed availability

The point-in-time count also showed that 823 — or 47% — of the 1,757 homeless residents counted were living outside of emergency or traditional shelters.

Camp Hope started as a protest over the lack of available shelter beds. In late 2021, homeless residents camped outside Spokane's City Hall to protest the lack of "low-barrier" beds — those that allow people to come in without requirements, such as identification or proof of sobriety. Low-barrier shelter has become the standard nationally, as homelessness service providers adopt the "housing first" model first developed in Seattle and elsewhere.

The encampment was moved to its current location in the East Central neighborhood, on property owned by the state Department of Transportation. That made the encampment eligible for funding through the state's Right of Way Initiative, which aims to help move residents living in state-owned right-of-ways into housing.

Through this program, the Department of Transportation, in collaboration with other agencies including the state Department of Commerce and Washington State Patrol, has worked with service providers to maintain services, such as mental and physical health care, clothing and food, at Camp Hope and with residents to get them into transitional or permanent housing.

About \$25 million in state dollars is available for various housing solutions. That has included contracting with several nonprofits for outreach to the unhoused, including running the Camp Hope encampment — and funding Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington's effort to purchase and renovate a former motel into housing.

Julie Garcia of Jewels Helping Hands, a nonprofit contracted by the state to manage the encampment, said more than 100 residents have transferred to housing, but more time is needed to find places for nearly 450 residents still on site.

Garcia said the encampment is not a free-for-all. Service providers come to the site to provide food, health care and other basic needs. Recently, a fence was installed around the encampment to increase security and separate the encampment from the rest of the neighborhood. Camp Hope residents are also under a curfew.

Still, such efforts haven't been good enough for city and county officials who maintain that the encampment is a nuisance property and needs to be emptied.

Spokane County Commissioners approved on a resolution earlier this month to pursue legal action to quicken a clearing-out of the encampment.

"This is the next step in a process in correcting, quite frankly, something that has gotten completely out of hand at the fault of [the state Department of Transportation] and the Department of Commerce," said Commissioner Josh Kerns just before the resolution was passed.

Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich went on Fox News to declare how Camp Hope has "devastated the neighborhood" and generated increased criminal activity.

Garcia said that Knezovich has never visited Camp Hope. During a recent Spokane County Commission meeting, Knezovich said he's informed through staff who have visited the encampment and through other means. He blamed "liberal policies" for the mess.

Knezovich did not return calls requesting comment for this story.

Spokane County Commissioners were also not available for comment but have issued a statement on why they were taking legal action:

"Commissioners approved this action in support of the Spokane County sheriff's determination to address the situation at Camp Hope and to ensure an opportunity for interested parties to appear before a Spokane County Superior Court Judge regarding the impacts of the current encampment on our community," the statement said.

Meanwhile, Spokane Police sent a warning to the state Department of Transportation and those running Camp Hope, stating the encampment has led to increased crime and other negative effects that have cost the city hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In public comments at various meetings, local government officials are using the increase in crime, and what it believes would be a more humane situation for residents come winter, to generate urgency to clear the camp.

The city and county also launched an emergency operations center this week to execute plans to clear out the camp.

Brian Coddington, a spokesman for the city of Spokane, said the city has shelter space to house Camp Hope residents.

Coddington said there had been ample shelter space since the summer. And the recently opened Trent Resource and Assistance Center, a city-owned shelter, can be expanded to house upwards of 400 residents. City officials in various comments and correspondence maintain between the Trent facility and other shelters there are nearly 600 beds available, a figure that is disputed by state agencies and homeless advocates.

Camp Hope “has gone for many months with no resolution,” he said. “The primary factor is getting people out of the elements into a shelter location where they can have the same access to services, same direction to housing.”

Garcia said that her organization, in cooperation with state agencies and other nonprofits, has established a system and trust among those who live in the encampment.

Clearing Camp Hope won’t solve the issue of homelessness in Spokane, she said, as unhoused people live in different parts of Spokane, not just at Camp Hope.

She said she plans to continue running the camp unless she is forced to do otherwise.

“We’re continuing to move forward the same way we were,” she said.

Advocates for the unhoused believe the public political battle over Camp Hope is a distraction from a clear reality: relative inaction from city and county officials when they had years to address the issue.

“Broadly speaking, the city, the people here have not wanted to face the reality of homelessness and how significant it is,” said Zeke Smith, president of the Empire Health Foundation. “People at a bunch of levels wanted to put their blinders on and in some ways have been able to do that until last year, until the establishment of Camp Hope.”

Empire Health Foundation, an organization that works toward health equity in the Inland Northwest, was tapped earlier this year to facilitate a coalition to discuss solutions to address homelessness in the region. Before a few months ago, the organization did not work with homelessness, but business and community leaders believed the organization could help craft an alternative approach, Smith said.

The foundation hired a consultant and scheduled several sessions where 30 to 40 service providers, government officials and others could talk and come up with solutions. Through this conversation, participants realized one key reason it was challenging to address the homelessness issue in Spokane: In spite of all the political debate over the issue, there was relatively little discussion on the full scope of the situation and what has been done about it.

One example came when someone in the group asked how many homeless outreach workers were active in the Spokane area.

“We spent 30 minutes trying to answer the question and couldn’t come up with an answer,” Smith said. “We don’t have any system that incorporates or includes outreach workers. If we don’t know how many outreach workers are in the system, how can we identify how many more we need?”

After meeting for three months, the coalition came up with a [document that recommended short- and long-term solutions](#) to address homelessness in Spokane, including how to spend state funding provided by the Commerce/WS-DOT Right of Way program and federal funding through the American Rescue Plan.

The recommendations include purchasing pallet homes and paying for health services and outreach to the residents of Camp Hope. The document recommended paying for 30 outreach workers to work in the region for three years.

The coalition sent the recommendations to the city of Spokane and Spokane County this summer, but those governments have not yet adopted them. Still, Smith believes the coalition illustrated that the community can come together to come up with solutions despite differing viewpoints and philosophies. He hopes this experience will lead to additional collaboration.

One actual result: Empire Health Foundation is fully invested in addressing homelessness in the community. The state contracted with the organization to help with outreach to those living at Camp Hope, helping them connect with various services and resources. It wasn't a role Smith or the staff anticipated playing, but they didn't want to pass up the opportunity to develop solutions.

The foundation, along with Jewels Helping Hands and Compassionate Addiction Treatment have worked on a system that serves residents on site rather than forcing them to move elsewhere.

"I continue to think we could build a more collaborative and coordinated system and give people a sense of what it looks like and feels like to get some real wins and real changes," Smith said.

Humanizing Camp Hope

For McGlenn, the East Central Neighborhood Council chairman, there was an unexpected silver lining to the existence of Camp Hope in the neighborhood: the ability to reconnect with an old friend (McGlenn lost contact with this friend after he could not help him deal with substance-abuse issues).

Camp Hope was true to its name for this friend: When McGlenn saw him in the encampment, he found his friend was employed with an organization on site and looked much healthier.

For McGlenn, the experience of seeing his friend humanized Camp Hope's residents and made him more skeptical about the narrative crafted by some.

"[My friend] is not the kind of person that deserves to get arrested by the Sheriff's Department because he has nowhere to go," he said. "These people are trying to do something to better themselves. They got to understand it takes time. It's not an instant solution."

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HEADLINE	10/28 Russia: 82,000 new draftees arrive in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-expects-arrival-of-fresh-russian-troops-within-two-weeks-11666958465?mod=series_rusukrainenato
GIST	<p>Russia has sent 82,000 newly conscripted men to Ukraine in just over a month, according to the country's defense minister, as Russian President Vladimir Putin seeks to turn the tide of the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Sergei Shoigu, the defense minister, said Friday that the mobilization of hundreds of thousands of men ordered by Mr. Putin on Sept. 21 was complete. Half of those sent to Ukraine were already assigned to combat units, the minister said.</p> <p>The mobilization has rocked Russian society, sending hundreds of thousands of men fleeing the country to avoid call-ups and stirring public outcry, after six months in which many Russians had hardly been affected by the conflict.</p> <p>Mr. Putin is hoping the new troops can help Russia gain the offensive in the war, which has swung in Ukraine's favor in recent months.</p> <p>"We are preparing for this—we are preparing for the fact that the current Russian leadership will look for any new opportunities to continue the war," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his nightly address Friday.</p>

In addition to the men already sent to the conflict zone, 218,000 others are still in training, Mr. Shoigu said, and no further mobilization was planned. The 300,000 troops who have been called up is roughly double the number who massed on the Ukrainian border at the start of the invasion in February, according to U.S. officials' estimates.

More than 27,000 entrepreneurs and 1,300 representatives of the authorities were called up, Mr. Shoigu said. The average age of the draftees is 35. After the mobilization announcement, many complained on social media of equipment shortages, poor living conditions and little training before they were sent to fight.

Mr. Shoigu on Friday acknowledged the issues but said those have been solved. Mr. Putin said that some difficulties were inevitable.

"Today, the most important thing is equipment, training, coordination," Mr. Putin said. "And everything related to making people feel confident if they need to take part directly in hostilities."

Ukrainian forces, meanwhile, are bracing for the arrival of new troops, most of whom will begin to arrive at the front lines within the next two weeks, according to military officials.

"The main involvement of those mobilized in the combat zone is expected approximately in 1½, two weeks. Probably to restrain our actions in certain areas of the front, as well as to evenly strengthen other areas of the front," said General Staff Deputy Chief Oleksii Hromov.

Mobilized Russian soldiers have already been fighting—and dying—in Ukraine for several weeks. [In Kherson](#), the southern regional capital where both sides are gearing up for a battle, soldiers who appear to have been mobilized recently have become an overwhelming presence on the street in recent weeks, according to residents.

The British Ministry of Defense said on Friday that Moscow is attempting to use the mobilized men to reinforce its positions on the west bank of the Dnipro River, where Kherson is located. However, the Russian units remain undermanned, the ministry said. "Russian officers described companies in the Kherson sector as consisting of between six and eight men each," the ministry wrote on Twitter. "Companies should deploy with around 100 personnel."

For months, Ukrainian forces have worked to cut off Russian troops on the west bank of the Dnipro River. Using [U.S.-supplied long-range rocket systems](#), they have taken out bridges across the river, as well as ammunition depots and logistics centers. With supply lines largely cut, Russian troops west of the river, including in the city of Kherson, are now likely severely undersupplied, according to military analysts.

Last week, Russian-installed officials in Kherson began telling residents to leave the city, in what they say was preparation for a Ukrainian assault. Since then, tens of thousands of people have been ferried across the Dnipro River to territory more firmly under Russian control. Ukrainian officials have said the evacuations are an effort to relocate Ukrainian sympathizers to Russia before Kherson is retaken.

In interviews, pro-Ukrainian residents said last week they would try to stay in Kherson and wait for Ukrainian forces to liberate them. Since then, however, cellphone service in the city has been almost completely cut, and Russian authorities have sent conflicting signals about whether the evacuation across the river was voluntary or mandatory.

On Friday, Kirill Stremousov, deputy head of the Russian-installed administration in the Kherson region, said [the evacuation of civilians](#) from the city had been completed. Some 70,000 people have been moved out of the region, Russian-installed officials have said. More than half the city's prewar population of 300,000 had already fled before the evacuation began last week, according to residents.

"It was not a forced evacuation," Mr. Stremousov said. "We gave people the opportunity to get out of the line of fire."

Volodymyr Saldo, head of the Russian administration in the region, said people would be allowed to return to the city once the movement across the river to the east slowed.

The Russian-installed civil defense and emergency service said that crossings continued to be open for those who wished to leave. The agency put the number of people evacuated at around 36,000.

Though civilians have been moved out of the city—and Russian officials said last week that the situation west of the Dnipro was very difficult—Ukrainian officials say Moscow is preparing to fight to hold on to Kherson.

“I don’t see Russians beating a hasty retreat from Kherson,” Mr. Zelensky told an Italian newspaper this week. “It’s a ruse. It’s a strategic retreat. They’re not ready to abandon the region, even though they run the risk of being encircled by our troops.”

Military analysts have said that Moscow’s severed supply lines would make it impossible for its forces to hold Kherson in the long term, but that retaking the city could be very costly—in terms of weaponry, damage to infrastructure and military and civilian lives—for Ukraine. Mr. Zelensky acknowledged the potential cost, saying, “The price will be high.”

“In the occupied territory, they are dismantling the entire healthcare system there,” he said Friday. “Russia is turning the Kherson region into a zone without civilization, without elementary things available in most countries of the world.”

Elsewhere, Moscow has continued to attack targets across Ukraine using [Iranian-made drones](#). In a video address posted very early Friday, Mr. Zelensky said 30 Iranian-made kamikaze drones had been launched into Ukraine in the previous two days; 23 were shot down by Ukraine’s air-defense systems, he said, as were a missile and two helicopters.

The drone-and-missile attacks have primarily targeted [Ukraine’s electrical grid](#) in recent weeks.

The Pentagon said Friday it would contribute \$275 million in additional military support for Ukraine. The package includes ammunition for Himars multiple-launch rocket systems, 500 precision-guided artillery rounds, 2,000 155 mm remote anti-armor mine rounds, 125 Humvees, small arms and more than 2.75 million rounds of small-arms ammunition.

The package is the 24th presidential drawdown from Pentagon inventories for Ukraine and brings total U.S. military assistance for the country to more than \$18.5 billion under the Biden administration.

Included in the drawdown are four satellite-communications antennas, one day after a senior Russian Foreign Ministry official said that Russia could target U.S. commercial satellites if they are used to help Ukraine.

[Elon Musk](#) said recently that his company SpaceX would [continue funding Ukrainian access](#) to its Starlink satellite-internet system, which has emerged as a critical device for the Ukrainian military, [allowing troops to stay connected](#) on the front lines.

The U.S. antennas won’t be compatible with the Starlink system but are meant to aid Ukrainian communications more generally.

“At a critical time when Ukraine’s infrastructure is being hit, these satcoms are not intended to serve as a substitute for a service like Starlink,” Sabrina Singh, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said Friday. “They help increase communication efforts on the battlefield.”

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SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-economy-expected-to-shrink-under-weight-of-sanctions-11666956390?mod=hp_major_pos1#cxrecs_s
GIST	<p>Russia is set for the deepest recession of any large economy this year, according to new forecasts from its central bank—and economists forecast a gloomy future as the windfall from high energy prices fades, sanctions tighten and the country struggles to replace Europe as the main buyer of its oil and gas.</p> <p>The Russian economy is suffering from the impact of sanctions and the withdrawal of Western businesses in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine in February. While Russia has benefited from soaring energy prices this year, economists expect revenue to fall sharply as the global economy slows and the West finds substitutes for Russian energy.</p> <p>The central bank’s forecast of a drop in gross domestic product of between 3% and 3.5% this year is less than it had expected soon after the start of the conflict.</p> <p>“The decline in GDP will be less significant than anticipated,” said Bank of Russia head Elvira Nabiullina. However, the expected contraction would likely be the largest recorded by a member of the Group of 20 largest economies.</p> <p>Immediately after the invasion, the bank expected the economy to contract between 8% and 10% this year, and by as much as 3% next year. It now expects GDP to contract between 1% and 4% next year.</p> <p>Before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the central bank expected the economy to grow as much as 3% in 2022. That means the war has cost the country more than 7% of its GDP in lost output this year alone.</p> <p>The Bank of Russia left its key interest rate unchanged for the first meeting since March, which was followed by six straight rate cuts to 7.5% from 20% as policy makers succeeded in stabilizing the ruble and the financial system in the wake of Western sanctions.</p> <p>The central bank warned that the economy could suffer a larger drop in output next year if Russia faces tougher sanctions, or weaker demand from a slowing global economy. The European Union aims to levy new sanctions on shipping Russian crude worldwide.</p> <p>“The difficulties are related to the economy adjusting to the kind of restrictions that had previously been introduced,” said Ms. Nabiullina. “This adaptation is taking place better than our expectations. But it doesn’t mean that is going to be easy further on because of course external pressure remains. It may become stronger, we’re very well aware of it.”</p> <p>The bank said growth could also suffer as a result of the government’s September decision to recruit an additional 222,000 troops.</p> <p>“Later on it might start to have a pro-inflationary impact due to a shortage of some specialist skills,” said Ms. Nabiullina.</p> <p>Sanctions and the voluntary withdrawal of Western businesses have hit some parts of the economy hard. According to figures released Wednesday by the Federal State Statistics Service, car production in September was less than half of its level a year earlier.</p> <p>But the economy has been cushioned by a surge in revenue from energy exports. The Kremlin’s steady reduction in supplies of natural gas to Europe to around 20% of their year-earlier levels in September has boosted Russian earnings by sending world energy prices sharply higher.</p> <p>A new study by research institute Bruegel estimates that higher prices have boosted Russia’s revenue from energy exports by \$120 billion in the first nine months of the year. The economists estimate that Russia will record a surplus in its income from the rest of the world over its expenditures there of \$240 billion this year, falling to \$100 billion in 2023.</p>

	<p>However, the bounce in energy revenue is unlikely to last. According to the International Energy Agency, Russia will suffer a permanent decline in energy production as a result of its invasion of Ukraine and Europe's subsequent loss of trust in the country.</p> <p>"Russian fossil fuel exports never return—in any of our scenarios—to the levels seen in 2021," the IEA said in a report Thursday.</p> <p>The research body said Russia's share of global exports of oil and gas could halve by 2030, and that it is unlikely that China will replace lost European markets for natural gas given its ambitions to cut carbon emissions.</p> <p>The loss of Russian supplies will have an impact on European economies, with many economists expecting output to fall in the final months of this year as cold weather raises energy consumption.</p> <p>But figures released Friday indicate that Europe's largest economies are proving more resilient to higher energy costs than had been expected. In particular, Germany's statistics agency said Europe's largest economy continued to grow in the three months through September despite production cuts in some energy-intensive manufacturing.</p> <p>"When you're looking at the global outlook and the European outlook, we see a lower growth, but we are not seeing deep recessions like in Russia," said Alfred Kammer, head of the International Monetary Fund's European department.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 India: Hindu nationalists target mosques
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/30/thousands-of-mosques-targeted-as-hindu-nationalists-try-to-rewrite-indias-history
GIST	<p>In a small, darkened office in Budaun, where dusty legal books line the walls, two lawyers have fallen into a squabble. VP Singh and his taller associate BP Singh – no relation – are discussing Shamsi Jama Masjid, the mosque that has stood in this small town in Uttar Pradesh for 800 years.</p> <p>According to the lawyers, this grand white-domed mosque, one of the largest and oldest in India, is not a mosque at all. "No no, this is a Hindu temple," asserted BP Singh. "It's a very holy place for Hindus."</p> <p>Records dating back to 1856 make reference to the working mosque, and according to local Muslims, they have been praying there undisturbed since it was built by Shamsuddin Iltutmish, a Muslim king, in 1223. The Singhs however, have a different version of events. In July, they filed a court case on behalf of a local Hindu farmer – and backed by the rightwing Hindu nationalist party Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha (ABHM) – alleging that Shamsi Jama Masjid is not a mosque but an "illegal structure" built on a destroyed 10th-century Hindu temple for the god Shiva. Their petition states that Hindus have rightful ownership of the land and should be able to pray there.</p> <p>Except, the two bickering lawyers can't quite agree on the historical facts. BP Singh initially claimed that the original Hindu temple was destroyed by a Muslim tyrant king – but then VP Singh contradicts him.</p> <p>"Not destroyed, altered," said VP Singh. "Most of the original Hindu temple is still there." They claim as evidence a lotus flower painted on the inside of the mosque dome. But when the Observer was given access to the mosque, there was no such Hindu motif, and instead it was the calligraphy of a Qur'anic verse. There was also no sign of an alleged "hidden locked room filled with Hindu idols" in the mosque, which VP Singh claimed he had seen in the 1970s as a child. Instead, the room in question was a store cupboard, filled with cleaning materials and prayer mats.</p> <p>The pair also could not settle on exactly when Shamsi Jama Masjid, which they refuse to call a mosque, began to be used by Muslims for prayer five times a day as it is today. After BP Singh stated that Muslims</p>

were praying there up till the 1800s, VP Singh leaned over to mutter quietly to his associate: “No no don’t say that, don’t say that.”

More loudly, VP Singh then proclaimed: “Actually no this wasn’t a mosque, it was never used for namaz [Muslim prayer] until recently when the Muslims forcibly occupied it and tried to convert it into a mosque.” They claimed to have “proof” but were unable to find it.

“When the Muslims ruled, we Hindus were all persecuted, we were killed and tortured,” added BP Singh. “Now we are taking back what is rightfully ours.”

The case has been met by puzzlement from local Muslims, who are contesting it in court. “How can you claim this is not a mosque?,” said Anwer Alam, legal counsel for the mosque committee, pointing up to the imposing white domes. “No Hindu has ever prayed at this mosque since its inception 800 years ago. This suit has no legal grounds.”

But those behind the case say Budaun is just the beginning. “We have a list of about 3,000 that we have decided to reclaim legally,” said Sanjay Hariyana, a state spokesperson for ABHM.

Since 2014, when the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) government came to power, India’s 200 million minority Muslims say they have been subjected to [persecution, violence and state-sponsored discrimination](#). Under the [Hindutva](#) (Hindu nationalist) agenda – which aims to establish India as a Hindu nation, rather than a secular state – Muslim civilians, activists and journalists have been routinely targeted, Muslim businesses boycotted and Islamophobic rhetoric used by BJP leaders, while [lynching of Muslims](#) has been on the rise.

Mosques have begun to be caught up in a wide-ranging project under the BJP to rewrite India’s history according to Hindutva ideology. The version of history now propagated by BJP leaders, government-backed historians and school curriculums is that of an ancient Hindu nation oppressed and persecuted for hundreds of years by ruthless Muslim invaders, particularly the Islamic Mughal empire that ruled from the 16th to the 19th century.

The alleged destruction of Hindu temples to build mosques has been central to this narrative. In May, a senior BJP leader claimed that Mughals had destroyed 36,000 Hindu temples and they would “reclaim all those temples one by one”.

But Richard Eaton, a professor of Indian history at the University of Arizona, said there was no historical evidence for this, with Mughals thought to have torn down only about two dozen temples. “Claims of many thousands of such instances are outlandish, irresponsible and without foundation,” he said.

Historians have accused the BJP of not only rewriting, but “inventing” India’s history in their own image. Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi, a professor of Mughal history at Aligarh Muslim University, described the BJP’s polarised version of Indian history as “fantasy, nothing more than fiction” invented to serve their political agenda. “The history of India is being painted as a black and white narrative of Hindus versus Muslims,” said Rezavi. “But it was never so.”

Yet Indian historians whose work contradicts this version of history, or who have spoken out, have found themselves sidelined, penalised or ousted from government bodies and academic institutions which rely on government funding.

Rezavi is one of the few historians in India who still dare to speak; many approached by the Observer declined, citing fears over their jobs or their safety. Foreign historians have also been targeted. Audrey Truschke, a history professor at Rutgers University in the US, has faced death threats, allegedly from Hindu rightwing groups, for her work on Mughals.

Rezavi likened the attacks and silencing of historians and scholars to the targeting of academics in Nazi Germany. “A large number of historians are afraid to speak up openly,” he said. “I have been a victim of

discrimination and persecution because of speaking up. But show me one Indian historian worth his salt who is with the government? There is not one.”

As the impetus to avenge and reclaim India’s history for Hindus has gained traction, dozens of petitions have been filed by right-wing Hindu groups against mosques across the country. India has a law which explicitly protects places of worship from being disputed post-1947 but judges are allowing cases. Even India’s most famous monument, the Taj Mahal, which was built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, has not escaped litigation, and a case – widely derided by historians – was filed alleging it was originally a Hindu temple with locked rooms of Hindu relics. Alok Vats, a senior BJP leader, said the party had “no role” in the lawsuits but that these groups were “seeking to do exactly what the Hindu community wants”.

The cases have been further galvanised by a 2019 supreme court ruling which handed over Babri Masjid, a 16th-century mosque in the Uttar Pradesh town of Ayodhya, to Hindus after they claimed it was the birthplace of their god, Lord Ram. In 1992, the mosque was torn down by a rightwing Hindu mob, an incident many fear could now be repeated with the escalating number of disputed mosques. This month, a mosque in the city of Gurgaon was violently attacked by a mob of about 200, while in the state of Karnataka a Hindu crowd barged into a madrassa, placed a Hindu idol inside and performed a prayer.

In Mathura, a city in Uttar Pradesh, Shahi Eidgah mosque, built by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1670, is now facing 12 lawsuits claiming it is built on the birthplace of the Hindu god Lord Krishna and ruins of a Hindu temple

Muslims are fighting the case but in a city that has long prided itself on communal harmony, Hindus are also among those opposing the dispute. Mahesh Pathak, chief of an all-India body of Hindu priests, said: “They say a temple was demolished by Aurangzeb but that is long in the past. This is all political, not religious.”

However, it is the legal dispute over the 17th-century Gyanvapi mosque, constructed by Aurangzeb in the holy city of Varanasi, which is seen by many as the crucial case that could decide the fate of mosques across India.

What began as one petition filed by five Hindu women in 2021, seeking access to pray inside the mosque which they claim is built on a destroyed ancient Shiva temple, has ballooned to 15 separate petitions, with many calling for the mosque to be torn down and a temple built in its place. Muslims still pray at Gyanvapi five times a day, though it is surrounded with prison-like security, including concrete barriers, barbed wire and a heavy police presence.

“This is a Hindu property, there is nothing connected to Muslims on this land,” said Anand Singh, the regional leader of Bajrang Dal, a Hindu nationalist militant organisation that has been financially and logistically supporting the Hindu legal case. “It is a Shiva temple and the current structure is an illegal structure. This is a very important moment for Hindus reclaiming their history and ancient glory,” he said.

One of the petitioners, Sita Sahoo, 46, admitted she had never been inside Gyanvapi but was sure that idols of Hindu deities were buried beneath the mosque, which she referred to only as a Shiva temple. “This is a holy place for all Hindus. We should have free daily access to this place for darshan [religious visits] and puja [prayer],” said Sahoo. During a hearing for the petition this month, four of the women stood outside the courtroom singing religious songs in front of dozens of eager television cameras.

The situation has become more febrile since May when lawyers for the Hindu side claimed to have “found” a religious icon of Lord Shiva, known as a Shivling, inside the mosque during a court-ordered survey.

Syed Mohammed Yaseen, 75, who has been the caretaker of Gyanvapi mosque for more than 30 years, said all these claims of Hindu iconography, idols and prayer inside the mosque were “unbelievable” and “completely untrue”. “Hindus have never prayed inside the mosque in its 350-year history,” he said.

	<p>He and dozens of other regulars at the mosque said the alleged Shivling was in fact part of a broken fountain that has been installed at the mosque for about 70 years, pointing out that it has a hole through the middle for water, something never seen on a Shivling icon. It has yet to be examined by judges or experts, but the area has been sealed by the courts. The BJP told the Observer that it had no connection to the lawsuit but after the discovery of the alleged Shivling, the BJP deputy chief minister of Uttar Pradesh declared that “Lord Shiva has appeared where we were looking for him”.</p> <p>But like many Muslims in Varanasi, Yaseen feared that in the current political climate, the case was already decided against them. “So far we haven’t seen any part of this trial to be fair,” he said. “This is a case which is being filed by Hindus and decided by Hindus, everybody is on their side: investigators, judiciary, government. I tried my best to appoint a Hindu lawyer but no Hindu lawyer would fight for us.”</p> <p>Abdul Batin Nomani, the grand mufti of Varanasi, who oversees all mosques in the city, was equally pessimistic. “We know this mosque is just the beginning,” he said “But if they hand it to the Hindus, there will be bloodshed.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Ukraine phone app to spot drone attacks
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/29/ukraine-phone-app-russia-drone-attacks-eppo
GIST	<p>A simple mobile phone app has been developed by Ukrainian volunteers to allow civilians to report sightings of incoming Russian drones and missiles – and, it is hoped, increase the proportion shot down before they hit the ground.</p> <p>The app, ePPO, relies on a phone’s GPS and compass, and a user only has to point their device in the direction of the incoming object and press a single button for it to send a location report to the country’s military.</p> <p>Gennady Suldin, one of those behind the project, said the aim was to enlist “the entire population” in helping to spot incoming attacks in what he described as an example of “web-centric war”.</p> <p>Ukraine has been subject to months of deadly long-range missile strikes, but the attacks have stepped up in the past month as Russia has fired hundreds of cheap, Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones into cities and at Ukraine’s infrastructure.</p> <p>Limitations in Ukraine’s air defences have meant that a minority of the distinctive delta-winged drones get through. Five civilians were killed when the centre of Kyiv was bombed a fortnight ago; on that day 28 drones were launched at the capital, five exploding near the main train station.</p> <p>Shahed-136 drones are a challenge for traditional radar to detect because their initial flight path is often low, perhaps 30m above ground, and their small size means they have a modest detection signature. As they close in on their targets, their altitude increases before they dive into the ground with terrifying effect.</p> <p>The drones have been particularly effective in bombing Ukraine’s power stations and energy grid, causing blackouts in Kyiv and elsewhere, and prompting a scramble by politicians and the military to find ways to halt them.</p> <p>Typically, the drones are set on course to fly over remote areas, rivers or other bodies of water, and are often launched at night. The attacks on Kyiv were launched from neighbouring Belarus, with drones flying low over the Dnipro river reservoir that runs from the border to the north of the capital.</p> <p>However, the team behind the app believes the drones’ relatively slow cruising speed, around 110mph, and their distinctive motorbike or lawnmower engine noise means they are easy to detect from the ground. “It is their Achilles heel,” Suldin said. “Once detected, these low-flying objects are easy to intercept.”</p>

Samuel Bendett, a drones expert and adviser to the US CNA military thinktank, agreed that the Shahed drones were “relatively loud and have a distinct sound in flight”, and that the app could be useful as part of Ukraine’s layers of defence. “Every bit of data can help to pinpoint the origin and trajectory of the attack,” he said.

For all the technological novelty, however, the app echoes previous systems of public air defence. During the Battle of Britain, the Royal Observer Corps, a network of volunteer spotters, worked closely with the Royal Air Force to identify German aircraft flying over the UK.

The British coastal radar system faced outwards, meaning that the 30,000-strong network of spotters was crucial in pinpointing the enemy inland.

Towards the end of the war, the focus shifted to the identification of incoming V1 and V2 German rockets.

So far the app has had limited publicity in Ukraine but has nonetheless been downloaded 180,000 times via word of mouth. Its developers acknowledge that it took five months of testing and work with the military and government officials to develop it.

Suldin said the app had already helped to spot previously undetected Shahed drones and Kalibr cruise missiles on a few occasions, but he said he could not provide an exact figure for security reasons. Senior air defence officers “did not expect it to be so efficient”, the app’s promotor said.

For security reasons, the ePPO app only works in conjunction with the established Diia government app, which allows adult Ukrainians to store their identity card, driving licence and other official documents on their phone. That means it cannot, in theory, be used by non-citizens.

The app has been available for around three weeks, although only on Google Android phones, while approval from Apple is expected within days. Setting it up takes only a couple of minutes, requiring a download and confirmation from Diia, with a finger or thumbprint.

Andrii Kosiak, an electronics supplier also involved in the development programme, said he hoped people who work in remote locations – “fishermen, railway workers” – would download the app, although it is not clear that rural populations use Diia, which has been taken up by around a third of the adult population.

Ukraine does not have the equipment to monitor its low-level airspace continuously, said Justin Bronk, an aviation analyst with the Rusi thinktank. “Updates from spotters,” he said, would “help the air defence network plot the course of missile and loitering munition raids, to alert air defence units along their course and tailor air raid warnings.”

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HEADLINE	10/30 Ukraine refugees UK face homeless crisis
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/30/ukrainian-refugees-uk-homelessness-councils-hosts
GIST	<p>Ministers need to act urgently to prevent a looming homelessness crisis among Ukrainian refugees, council leaders have warned.</p> <p>More than 100,000 people have become guests of British families under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, but many are coming to the end of their six-month stays and finding there is nowhere for them to go.</p> <p>The government plan was for Ukrainians to either rent their own homes or “rematch” with other hosts. But local authorities responsible for overseeing the scheme say they are struggling to find people to take in the refugees.</p> <p>The District Councils Network, which represents 183 mostly rural local authorities, said that it had received many reports of hosts deciding not to rematch. A Leicestershire local authority found that only 10% of people who had expressed an interest in hosting in the spring were now willing to help with</p>

rematching. A similar survey of 2,700 potential hosts by a Gloucestershire council had a positive response from only 15%.

Nataliia Kozhushko, a 38-year-old engineer from the Kharkiv region, and her host Amy, have been looking for a new host for six weeks without success. Kozhushko has been living with the family in Cropredy in Oxfordshire since April, but the family has had a change in circumstances, and Kozhushko needs to move for work. She has a job at Aldi in Banbury, four miles away, and is learning English at college, yet the bus to Banbury runs only twice a week, so the villagers have banded together to provide transport.

“We’ve advertised on Facebook for her with a lovely picture of her but not had a single person come forward,” Amy said. “It’s such a wonderful experience our family has had, and if anyone has a spare room that can offer a Ukrainian refugee, whether it’s Nataliia or someone else, then I can tell them that the positives far outweigh any negatives.”

“Amy has done so much for me,” Kozhushko said. “In the first six weeks we tried to get as much information as possible. She took me to 100 places, to visit a dentist and a doctor, my universal credit, bank account. And people in the village helped a lot. They sent clothes for me. And a lot of them we didn’t even know.” She hopes to become a translator and is worried about her brother and parents remaining in Ukraine.

By Christmas, about 14,000 Ukrainians are expected to have come to the end of their stay and if they cannot find another host or private accommodation they will be homeless. The latest figures show that 1,915 Ukrainians have presented to councils as homeless.

At the moment, 4,000 Ukrainians are looking for sponsors, according to the Ukrainian Sponsorship Pathway, a charity set up to support the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Barry Wood, the Conservative leader of Cherwell district council which has been supporting Kozhushko, said that rematching was proving difficult and was often not the right solution.

“Where there is a breakdown of the arrangement heading our way, we’re looking for substitute hosts,” he said. “That’s not ideal, especially when there are kids in primary schools because they shouldn’t be uprooted.”

He said that many of Cherwell’s hosts were clustered in specific villages, perhaps because there were members of the same church congregation or other network. Those clusters mean the refugees can support each other, but many now want to move to towns and cities for jobs and better transport.

About half of Ukrainians are housed by district councils. Figures compiled by the DCN show that there are 226 residents per Ukrainian in South Cambridgeshire – the highest ratio of any local authority in England – with South Oxfordshire, Chichester, Waverley and Wealden making up the top five.

Bridget Smith, the Liberal Democrat leader of South Cambridgeshire district council and vice-chair of the DCN, said the government needed to take action now to prevent a crisis. “Now that we have the cost of living crisis, I think that makes the potential for a crisis much more real. No matter how altruistic and kind and generous our hosts are – and many are not wealthy people – this will be putting serious pressures on them,” she said.

Councils already have more than a million households in the UK waiting for homes so anyone becoming homeless now will be added to those lists, and councils then need to find money to maintain them in bed and breakfast accommodation.

“I have about 1,600 people on my housing list at the moment and some of the London boroughs have tens of thousands,” Smith said. “I get the sense that the government thinks the job has been done. They urgently need to review the schemes.”

	<p>“The cost of living crisis is going to start impacting really badly on all councils. Just the cost of filling our bin lorries is putting massive pressure on us. We’re a council in a reasonably good place, but we’re still really, really worried about how we’re going to manage in the next two years.”</p> <p>A government spokesperson said: “We have protected more than 136,600 Ukrainians since Putin’s invasion and the vast majority of these arrivals are settling in well.</p> <p>“ONS survey results show the majority of sponsors want to stay on beyond the initial six months. All arrivals are able to work, claim benefits and we’re giving councils £10,500 per person to cover any additional costs, including emergency accommodation if needed.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Day 248 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/29/russia-ukraine-war-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-248-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia’s defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, has said the partial mobilisation of reservists announced in September “has been completed” and “no further measures are planned”. Speaking at a meeting with Vladimir Putin broadcast on state television, Shoigu said 82,000 mobilised recruits were in the conflict zone and a further 218,000 in training in barracks. His statement reflects what the west called a desperate effort to halt Kyiv’s counteroffensive with poorly trained troops. • About 4 million people across Ukraine are being hit by power cuts from rolling blackouts due to Russia’s bombing campaign, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has said. Agence France-Presse quoted energy company DTEK, the operator for the Kyiv region, as saying it would have to introduce “unprecedented” power cuts to prevent a complete blackout. • Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, said he had received a phone call from his Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, on Friday and had demande d’arrêt de l’envoi d’armes à la Russie. Ukraine and western allies accuse Iran of sending “kamikaze” drones to Russia that have been used to devastating effect against Ukrainian infrastructure. Iran denies the charge. • At least four people were killed and 10 wounded when several towns neighbouring the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia power plant were hit by shelling, a statement from the Ukrainian presidential office said. • The Russian defence ministry said its forces had repelled attempted Ukrainian advances in the east and had destroyed a Ukrainian military factory near the town of Pavlograd. • The US will provide \$275m in additional military assistance to Ukraine, including arms, munitions and equipment from US defence department inventories, the secretary of state has said. “We are also working to provide Ukraine with the air defence capabilities it needs with the two initial US-provided Nasams ready for delivery to Ukraine next month,” Antony Blinken said. “And we are working with allies and partners to enable delivery of their own air defence systems to Ukraine.” • Assets belonging to Russian and Belarusian individuals seized by Ukraine could be used for the huge postwar reconstruction effort, the Ukrainian finance minister, Serhiy Marchenko, has been quoted as saying. The government has frozen Russian and Belarusian assets in Ukraine worth about 44 billion hryvnias (\$1.21bn) since the start of Moscow’s invasion, according to the Economic Security Bureau, a state agency. • The European Union has appointed a Polish general, Piotr Trytek, to lead a new training operation with Ukrainian troops. Trytek, 51, was chosen as part of the EU’s pledge to step up military support for Ukraine. • Vladimir Putin’s first deputy chief of staff has visited the Russian-held Ukrainian city of Kherson. Sergei Kiriyenko stopped at a ferry port where hundreds of people were being removed by order of Russian authorities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Russian official's threat to strike western satellites aiding Ukraine has raised concerns among space lawyers and industry executives about the safety of objects in orbit. No country has carried out a missile strike against an enemy's satellite. • UN nuclear inspectors are expected to reach a conclusion soon on Russia's claims of the possible production of a "dirty bomb". Investigators are being sent to two locations in Ukraine where Russia alleged the activities were taking place.
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HEADLINE	10/30 Day 249 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/30/russia-ukraine-war-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-249-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Russian government has written to the United Nations saying it is <u>indefinitely suspending the Black Sea grain deal</u> that allowed vital exports of Ukrainian food supplies. Moscow also requested a related meeting of the UN security council in New York on Monday. The US president, Joe Biden, said Russia's actions were outrageous. • The UN secretary general urged Russia and Ukraine to renew the grain deal that has seen more than 8m tonnes of grain exported from Ukraine and brought down global food prices. The agreement between Ukraine and Russia was due to expire on 19 November. • Britain's Ministry of Defence said Russia's defence ministry was "peddling false claims of an epic scale" after Moscow accused the British navy of a "terrorist attack" on Nord Stream gas pipelines and claimed British "specialists" aided a drone attack in Sevastopol. Britain's MoD said: "This latest invented story says more about the arguments going on inside the Russian government than it does about the west." • Ukrainian electricity supplies were recovering after concerted Russian attacks on generating plants but emergency blackouts may still be needed, Volodymyr Zelenskiy said. "Today there are already significantly fewer stabilisation [measures] and emergency blackouts ... but restrictions are still possible in some cities and districts." • The European Union has frozen Russian assets worth about €17bn (£14.6bn or \$17bn) since Moscow invaded Ukraine, according to the EU justice commissioner, Didier Reynders. • Up to 100 prisoners of war have reportedly been exchanged between Russia and Ukraine. Russia's defence ministry said on Saturday that Ukraine handed over 50 prisoners of war after talks. The Ukrainian armed forces account posted on Telegram that "52 Ukrainians returned home" during another "exchange of prisoners". • The Ukrainian presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak has expressed scepticism about the takeover of Twitter by Elon Musk. The billionaire and Tesla boss drew fury from Kyiv and praise from Moscow this month when he posted a Twitter poll proposing Ukraine permanently cede Crimea to Russia, that referendums be held under UN auspices on the fate of Russian-controlled territory, and that Ukraine agree to neutrality. • Russian-backed forces say they have finished a pull-out of civilians from the key southern Ukrainian city of Kherson. The city had a population of about 288,000 people before the war and was one of the first to fall to Moscow's troops after the February invasion. A Russian-installed official in Kherson said at least 70,000 people had left their homes in the space of a week. • A mobile phone app has been developed by Ukrainian volunteers to <u>allow civilians to report sightings of incoming Russian drones and missiles</u> – and, it is hoped, increase the proportion shot down before they hit the ground. The app, ePPO, relies on a phone's GPS and compass, and a user only has to point their device in the direction of the incoming object and press a button for it to send a location report to the military.
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HEADLINE	10/29 Canada: immigrants are 23% of population
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/29/world/canada/canada-immigration-support.html
GIST	Immigration to Canada has grown so much that this week Statistics Canada announced a new milestone in the country's history, a wave of immigration so large that it has exceeded even the country's two previous largest waves.

It's bigger than the one that resulted from the aggressive promotion of European settlement on Indigenous land on the prairies during the early 20th century and bigger than the one that took place after World War II when a wave of immigrants reshaped urban Canada.

And according to polling data, most Canadians like it that way, though more tension over immigration could be on the horizon. At a time when immigration has become an increasingly divisive political issue in many Western countries, particularly the United States, indications are that most Canadians are welcoming newcomers even as their numbers rise.

"There is growing recognition that immigration is important in terms of the economy and that immigrants, the country kind of needs them," Keith Neuman, a senior associate at the Environics Institute for Survey Research, a nonprofit polling firm, told me.

[Census data released this week](#), revealed by Statistics Canada, said that immigrants made up 23 percent of Canada's population this year, the highest proportion since Confederation in 1867.

If current patterns in immigration remain and Canada's birthrate continues to be lower than what is necessary to maintain current population, the census agency estimates that immigrants may form 29 to 34 percent of the population 19 years from now.

To accompany the Statistics Canada announcement, the Environics Institute released a survey of [Canadians' attitude toward immigration](#). The survey, which dates back in various forms to the 1970s, found a record level of support: 69 percent of people it contacted disagreed when asked if Canada was taking in too many immigrants. Fifty-eight percent said they wanted more immigration to increase Canada's population.

That positive view of immigration, the survey found, even extended to Quebec despite its adoption of a [law banning the wearing of religious symbols](#) by public employees and officials at work, a move that many have seen as targeting Muslim immigrants.

Mr. Neuman and Aryn B. Sajoo, a lecturer at Simon Fraser University School for International Studies who writes extensively about immigration and citizenship, shared some thoughts about the source of the country's good will toward immigration.

Perhaps at the top of their lists is that geographic isolation from places experiencing high levels of emigration means that the country can be selective about who comes here. There has never been a period when most [refugee claimants walked into the country](#), despite all of the attention once paid to asylum seekers coming into Quebec from New York State. On the whole, Canada chooses who can come.

Then 60 percent of the 431,645 immigrants who [became permanent residents of Canada](#) last year fell into the "economic" category. They qualify for that status by being either highly educated, willing and financially able to start a business, possessing a needed job skill or committing to make a substantial investment in an existing business in Canada.

"We filter who can come in as refugees and immigrants," Dr. Sajoo said. "Therefore, the public has more confidence in the system."

On top of that, Dr. Sajoo noted the strong approval for Canada's official multiculturalism policy. In the Environics Institute survey, an overwhelming 90 percent of the respondents said that it was an important part of the Canadian identity.

"More than ever, Canadians are accepting the idea that we're better off in a pluralist, democratic space," he said. "That we're not just an Anglo-French demographic." The growing awareness of Indigenous issues since the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), Dr. Sajoo added, has also increased this sentiment.

	<p>While the Environics Institute survey found that Conservative voters make up the largest number of people who think there is too much immigration, Pierre Poilievre, the leader of the Conservative Party, has focused on wooing immigrants and regularly reminds voters that his wife, Anaida, emigrated to Canada from Venezuela with her family at the age of 8.</p> <p>But before Canadians become too self-satisfied about their openness to immigration, Dr. Sajoo said that one finding in the survey suggests the country is not fully immune to some of the political sentiment growing in other nations.</p> <p>Respondents were almost evenly divided when asked if there are too many immigrants “not adopting Canadian values.” Forty-nine percent rejected that statement, 46 percent agreed with it.</p> <p>“There is a flattering, fairy tale narrative that we’re wonderful and all is good,” Dr. Sajoo said. “But there is not at all enough attention to that 50/50 split on Canadian values,” he added, saying it “suggests that populism and populist rhetoric, supremacist rhetoric is coming across the border and also developing locally.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Western weapons give Ukraine upper hand
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/29/world/europe/ukraine-russia-war-artillery.html
GIST	<p>KHERSON REGION, Ukraine — On the screen of a thermal imaging camera, the Russian armored personnel carrier disappeared in a silent puff of smoke.</p> <p>“What a beautiful explosion,” said First Lt. Serhiy, a Ukrainian drone pilot who watched as his weapon buzzed into a Russian-controlled village and picked off the armored vehicle, a blast that was audible seconds later at his position about four miles away.</p> <p>“We used to cheer, we used to shout, ‘Hurray!’ but we’re used to it now,” he said.</p> <p>The war in Ukraine has been fought primarily through the air, with artillery, rockets, missiles and drones. And for months, Russia had the upper hand, able to lob munitions at Ukrainian cities, towns and military targets from positions well beyond the reach of Ukrainian weapons.</p> <p>But in recent months, the tide has turned along the front lines in southern Ukraine. With powerful Western weapons and deadly homemade drones, Ukraine now has artillery superiority in the area, commanders and military analysts say.</p> <p>Ukraine now has an edge in both range and in precision-guided rockets and artillery shells, a class of weapons largely lacking in Russia’s arsenal. Ukrainian soldiers are taking out armored vehicles worth millions of dollars with cheap homemade drones, as well as with more advanced drones and other weapons provided by the United States and allies.</p> <p>The Russian military remains a formidable force, with cruise missiles, a sizable army and millions of rounds of artillery shells, albeit imprecise ones. It has just completed a mobilization effort that will add 300,000 troops to the battlefield, Russian commanders say, though many of those will be ill trained and ill equipped. And President Vladimir V. Putin has made clear his determination to win the war at almost any cost.</p> <p>Still, there is no mistaking the shifting fortunes on the southern front.</p> <p>Ukraine’s growing advantage in artillery, a stark contrast to fighting throughout the country over the summer when Russia pummeled Ukrainian positions with mortar and artillery fire, has allowed slow if costly progress in the south toward the strategic port city of Kherson, the only provincial capital that Russia managed to occupy after invading in February.</p>

The new capabilities were on display in the predawn hours Saturday when Ukrainian drones hit a Russian vessel docked in the Black Sea Fleet's home port of Sevastopol, deep in the occupied territory of Crimea, once thought an impregnable bastion.

The contrast with the battlefield over the summer could not be starker. In the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, Russia fired roughly 10 artillery rounds for each answering shell from Ukrainian batteries. In Kherson now, Ukrainian commanders say the sides are firing about equal numbers of shells, but Ukraine's strikes are not only longer range but more precise because of the satellite-guided rockets and artillery rounds provided by the West.

"We can reach them and they cannot reach us," said Maj. Oleksandr, the commander of an artillery battery on the Kherson front, who like others interviewed for this article gave only his first name for security reasons. "They don't have these weapons."

Falling rates of Russian fire also speak to ammunition shortages, he said. "There is an idea the Russian army is infinite, but it is a myth," he said. "The intensity of fire has fallen by three times. It's realistic to fight them."

A main highway approaching Kherson city from the west has become a thoroughfare for Ukrainian artillery, with towed howitzers, truck-mounted howitzers and trucks laden with grad rockets rumbling by continually through the day.

American-provided M777 howitzers firing precision-guided shells and striking up to 20 miles behind Russian lines have forced the Russians to stage heavy equipment farther from the front. Ukrainian drones spot infantry but fewer tanks or armored vehicles near the front line, said First Lt. Oleh, the commander of a unit flying reconnaissance drones. "We hear a lot of rumors they are abandoning the first lines of defense."

This firepower has tipped the balance in the south, raising expectations that a long-anticipated assault on Kherson is drawing near — though a swirl of apparent misdirection from military leaders on both sides has clouded the picture.

The terrain around the city — table-flat steppe with thin tree lines and little cover, and crisscrossed by irrigation canals that can be used as trenches — favors its Russian defenders. And Ukrainian commanders and officials have been dropping hints of an impending attack since the spring, only to have the fighting drag on.

But the city lies on the west bank of the Dnipro River, making its defenders reliant on bridges to Russian territory on the eastern bank that now lie within easy range of Ukrainian rocket artillery and, for the most part, are now unusable. That has made the Russian grip precarious. But President Putin has reportedly overruled his generals' recommendations of a retreat to safer and more easily defended ground on the east bank.

The question remains just how long the Russian forces can, or will, hold out in Kherson.

"Russia is unable to maintain logistics supplies" to the west bank of the Dnipro, said Konrad Muzyka, a military analyst and the director of Rochan Consulting, based in Gdansk, Poland. He added that the Ukrainian military's claim to have achieved the upper hand in artillery and frontline drone strikes in the south was "highly plausible."

After a recent Ukrainian assault using American M777 howitzers and High Mobility Artillery Rockets, Slovak Zuzana self-propelled artillery and Polish Krab self-propelled artillery, Mr. Muzyka said, citing Ukrainian military sources, heavily battered Russian artillery positions on one section of the Kherson front went silent for more than 48 hours.

A recent drone attack led by Lieutenant Serhiy provided another example of the Russian forces' vulnerabilities.

Equipped with night-vision goggles — an essential item of modern warfare that the Russian forces generally lack — the soldiers drove to the front line in an SUV with the headlights off, passing the jagged ruins of houses in a destroyed village silhouetted by a thin sliver of the moon.

Rattling under the driver's seat were eight small bombs, each packed with a pound and a half of high explosives, enough to obliterate an armored vehicle. In the rear storage area sat a high-end, commercially available drone.

From a rooftop position, two former computer programmers turned tank hunters directed drone strikes that took out two Russian armored vehicles in the space of about three hours, destroying more than a million dollars of Russian weaponry with a weapon that cost about \$20,000.

After each flight, the drone buzzed back a few minutes later, unscathed.

This drone system, called Perun, one of dozens used by the Ukrainian military, swoops in at an altitude of about 500 feet, hovers directly over a target and releases its bombs.

The drones are audible from the ground but still effective, Lieutenant Serhiy said, as the Russian forces "don't have much time" to shoot them down. It cannot be flown in all weather, and sometimes misses. "The technology is not perfect," he said, "but it works when it works."

Farther from the front line, out of drone range, American-provided, satellite-guided artillery shells have forced the Russian military to carefully camouflage or pull back heavy equipment, said Lieutenant Oleh, the commander of a drone surveillance unit.

"Russia's advantage was only one thing: quantity," Lieutenant Oleh said in an interview at his base, a house along a muddy lane in a village. The inside was crammed with screens, laptops, cables and batteries. A strip of flypaper dangled from the ceiling.

Sitting in front of his screens, he pinpoints tanks, barracks or other military objects and relays coordinates to artillery teams firing satellite guided shells, which hit within a yard or two of their intended targets.

"From a typical howitzer, you create a sniper rifle," he said of the combination of drone surveillance and satellite guided artillery shells, something Russia lacks. "One shot, one kill."

The partial destruction of bridges over the broad Dnipro River through the summer slowed Russia's movement of heavy equipment to the river's western bank, even as Western weaponry helped Ukraine whittle away at what was already there. The combination cost Russia its artillery advantage on the river's western bank.

"Think of the orcs in their trenches," Lieutenant Oleh said, using a derisive term for Russian soldiers. "They have no heavy weaponry, no supplies, it's cold and raining. It's a really difficult state for morale."

If they try to hold out in Kherson city, he said, referring to a protracted battle with the Nazis in World War II, "it will be Stalingrad in winter for them."

While the messaging and movement of forces around Kherson on both sides have been hard to decipher, by design, there is no mistaking which side has the momentum.

Major Oleksandr, the commander of the Ukrainian self-propelled howitzer battery, said he had the sense of the Russian lines that "if we shake them, they will disintegrate." But he was also aware of the possibility of deception, with the Russians trying to lure Ukraine into a premature advance by falsely signaling a willingness to withdraw.

	Ukraine's buildup of forces could also be a trick, he said.
	"The plans of our leadership are always unpredictable," Major Oleksandr said, "and I like it that way."
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HEADLINE	10/30 Ukraine, Russia exchange prisoners
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/30/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#ukraine-and-russia-exchange-more-than-100-prisoners-of-war-officials-say
GIST	<p>Ukrainian and Russian officials said they exchanged more prisoners on Saturday, freeing more than 100 people in the latest indication that the countries were still able to negotiate the release of their citizens despite intense fighting on the battlefield.</p> <p>Andriy Yermak, the leader of the Ukrainian president's office, said that 52 Ukrainians had been released. In a video Mr. Yermak posted on Twitter, the released Ukrainians were seen walking down an unidentified road, many waving and some smiling at the camera. At the back of the convoy, two men held up a third as they walked.</p> <p>The release was heralded by President Volodymyr Zelensky, who said in his nightly address on Saturday that more than 1,000 people had been released from Russian captivity since March.</p> <p>"We remember all those held captive in Russia and in the occupied territory, and will do everything to return each and every one," he said.</p> <p>The prisoners released Saturday included 18 navy personnel, 12 national guard soldiers, eight policemen and two civilians, Mr. Yermak said.</p> <p>Among the soldiers, Mr. Yermak said, were two members of the Azov Battalion, whose weekslong defense of the Azovstal steel plant in the southern port city of Mariupol emerged as a powerful symbol of resistance mounted by Ukraine.</p> <p>The Russian Ministry of Defense said in a statement on Saturday that 50 Russian servicemen had been released by Ukraine as part of the exchange. It said the prisoners were being taken to Moscow for "treatment and rehabilitation."</p> <p>The treatment of prisoners of war has been a concern since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February. Earlier this month, United Nations investigators in Ukraine said they were receiving accounts of Russian forces torturing civilian and military prisoners — sometimes to the point of death.</p> <p>In September, Ukrainian officials said Ukrainian prisoners of war in Russia were detained under abusive and extreme conditions, subjected to beatings and denied food.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 US: Russia weaponizing food
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/30/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#the-us-says-russia-is-weaponizing-food-by-halting-grain-shipments
GIST	<p>The United States called Russia's announcement that it would withdraw from an agreement to allow the export of grain from Ukrainian ports "outrageous" on Saturday and said Moscow was using food as a weapon.</p> <p>"It's really outrageous to increase starvation," President Biden said on Saturday, in remarks to reporters in Delaware, after he cast his ballot in the U.S. midterm elections.</p> <p>"There's no merit to what they're doing," he added, referring to the Russians.</p>

His secretary of state, Antony J. Blinken, said Russia's move would take an outsize toll on lower-income countries that were depending on Ukrainian products like wheat, corn and sunflower oil.

"In suspending this arrangement, Russia is again weaponizing food in the war it started, directly impacting low- and middle-income countries and global food prices, and exacerbating already dire humanitarian crises and food insecurity," Mr. Blinken said in a statement. "We urge all parties to keep this essential, lifesaving initiative functioning."

The grain deal, which was brokered by the United Nations and Turkey in July, allowed commercial vessels carrying agricultural products to leave Ukraine and cross the Black Sea to Turkey, where their cargo would be inspected by a joint command that included officials from Ukraine, Russia, Turkey and the United Nations.

As of Thursday, millions of tons of grain and other foodstuffs had been exported through the deal, according to the office overseeing its implementation.

Stéphane Dujarric, a spokesman for the United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, called on the warring parties to ensure the continuation of the grain deal, officially known as the Black Sea Grain Initiative, calling it "a critical humanitarian effort."

The British foreign secretary, James Cleverly, said the grain deal is instrumental for global food security.

"Russia should allow grain exports to reach the world's hungry," he wrote on Twitter.

In a statement on Saturday, the Russian Foreign Ministry accused Ukraine of launching "massive air and sea strikes using drones" on its Black Sea Fleet's ships, infrastructure and naval base in the port city of Sevastopol.

That meant, the ministry said, that Russia could no longer ensure the security of cargo ships taking grain from Ukrainian ports and so would suspend the grain deal indefinitely.

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine asked for "a strong international response" to the halt to grain shipments, particularly from leaders of the Group of 20 nations, who are gathering in mid-November in Indonesia.

"How can Russia be among the G20 if it is deliberately working for starvation on several continents?" he asked in his nightly address on Saturday.

President Biden and Russia's leader, Vladimir V. Putin, are expected to attend the G20 summit, but it is unclear whether the two will speak with each other.

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HEADLINE	10/30 Russian collaborators face criminal purge
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/thousands-of-russian-collaborators-in-ukraine-have-made-one-hell-of-a-fuck-up?ref=home
GIST	<p>The Russians fled quickly from Cherneshchyna, abandoning their positions in a panic and disappearing into the night to escape the Ukrainian advance. "On the morning of Oct. 2, they were just gone," says Oleksiy, a resident of this small village on the eastern edge of the Kharkiv region, where a sudden Ukrainian counter-offensive made Russian soldiers flee without a fight, leaving behind ammunition boxes, propaganda newspapers, and empty vodka bottles in their trenches and foxholes.</p> <p>But in Cherneshchyna—as in many other towns and villages across the region—it wasn't just the Russians who fled as Ukrainian forces secured bridgeheads on the west bank of the Oskil river and liberated a string</p>

of settlements in a lightning-fast advance. Dozens of villagers—who had either sympathized or openly collaborated with the invaders—joined the flight too.

Three weeks on, the fighting is not yet over in the area. Artillery fire still booms out as Ukrainian troops push on into the neighboring Luhansk oblast. But whatever happens on the battlefield, life here, and in other liberated towns and villages in eastern and southern Ukraine, will never return to normal until there has been a reckoning—between those who collaborated with the Russians and those who resisted.

According to Oleksiy, a former mechanic who had fled the fighting in Izyum, as many as one-third of the 700 residents of Cherneshchyna were either collaborators or Russian sympathizers. The priest officiating at the local St. Nicholas Church—affiliated with the Moscow patriarchate—was reportedly among those who fled the advancing Ukrainian troops. “He scampered to Russia, and stole some of the icons from the church,” laughs 35-year-old Olena, Oleksiy’s wife.

As Russian troops and armored vehicles poured into towns and villages across the country, many, like Oleksiy and his family bided their time, waiting for the moment they could come out and greet advancing Ukrainian soldiers with the blue and yellow flag they had kept hanging on the clothes-line—despite being ordered to take it down by Russian soldiers. “We never doubted, we knew that Ukraine would take back Cherneshchyna, and we waited,” says Olena. Her husband chimes in: “The Ukrainian soldiers told us ‘You guys are fearless’ when they saw that we had kept the flag outside.”

Yet, others chose to collaborate with the Russians, out of greed, fear, or ideological conviction.

While Oleksiy tells us that Ukraine’s security service has not yet made it to the village, local police have already been hard at work to identify and detain suspected collaborators. Twenty miles east of Cherneshchyna, in the village of Horokhovatka, a 30-year-old resident was arrested on Wednesday by local police. The man is suspected of having provided food to the Russians and of having denounced his neighbors harboring pro-Ukrainian views to the occupiers—a move with potentially deadly consequences, as Russian soldiers routinely abducted, tortured, and murdered pro-Ukrainian activists, residents, and local officials.

The man—who faces up to 12 years in prison if convicted—is among the hundreds of Ukrainian citizens currently facing criminal proceedings for having provided help to Russian forces. As of Sept. 16, 1,358 similar cases had already been opened against individuals and local officials throughout the country, according to the head of Ukraine’s National Police, Ihor Klymenko.

In liberated settlements, retribution is at hand for those suspected of having collaborated with the enemy. On a Facebook post celebrating the liberation of the town and the surrounding villages, the city council of Borova claimed that a number of Russian sympathizers had already been detained by law enforcement agencies, adding that in the nearby village of Izyumske, the house of the collaborator and self-appointed “elder” (*mayor*) had burned down “as a result of spontaneous combustion.” [According to the Kharkiv Anti-Corruption Center](#), this local gym teacher and member of the local soccer federation had called a community meeting in April, during which he proclaimed himself mayor of the village and had set to work on preparations for a “referendum” on annexing the region to Russia.

While the self-proclaimed mayor’s current [whereabouts are unknown](#), his name and information have already been published on the Myrotvorets website, a [database](#) of people deemed to be “enemies of Ukraine” by the secretive team behind the project.

Meanwhile, a local Telegram channel titled “TRAITORS” has been busy publishing the identities of civilians and local officials suspected of having helped the occupiers in Borova and the surrounding region. Among them, a husband and wife from the nearby village of Pisky-Rad’kivs’ki, who are accused of having worn the St George’s ribbon—a Russian military symbol now associated with support for the invasion of Ukraine—and of having allowed Russian forces to station their vehicles in their backyard. A slew of similar channels—some of them with tens of thousands of subscribers—have popped up during the

first weeks and months of the occupation, documenting the identities and alleged offenses of suspected collaborators, and posting them online.

In Cherneshchyna, locals say, the Russian sympathizers all left in a hurry. “Had they stayed, well, they wouldn’t be here anymore,” says Mikhail with a grin. The young man in his twenties tells us how Russian soldiers had searched him and other residents for nationalist tattoos, as part of a systematic effort to root out “Nazis” and “Banderites” in the area. Mikhail says Vladimir Putin’s soldiers detained and tortured people in the basement of the local school, hoping to extort information from them on the positions and movements of Ukrainian forces.

In the occupied territories of Ukraine, dozens of collaborators have already [met their end](#) at the hands of local partisans, sometimes acting in concert with Ukrainian special services, as military officials have confirmed. And as the Ukrainian Armed Forces liberate towns and villages across the eastern and southern regions of the country, some of their brutalized residents could be tempted to dish out swift, extrajudicial retribution of their own. Already, [experts warn](#) that vigilante groups may try to seek revenge for Russia’s war crimes—and against the people who abetted them.

For a Frenchman, who now lives in Ukraine, there is a clear historical precedent. As a student in France, I learned about the brief but violent episode of the *épuration sauvage*—the “unofficial purge”—when in the immediate aftermath of the country’s liberation from German occupation in 1944, the people of France settled their scores with those who had collaborated with the Nazis. Members of the *Milice*—Vichy France’s vicious paramilitary organization that had helped to round up Jews and *résistants*—were summarily executed, while women who had slept with German soldiers had their heads shaved and were paraded in front of jeering crowds. While some of the initial estimates were vastly overblown—sometimes in an attempt to rehabilitate collaborators and Nazi sympathisers—the most recent put the number of extrajudicial executions during the *épuration* at roughly 9,000.

Perhaps the onus should not fall on Ukraine alone to ensure that Russian war criminals and the people who helped and enabled them are held accountable. There should be a process that is thorough, transparent, and internationally accountable. Lest the people take the matter into their own hands, once again.

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HEADLINE	10/29 Russia: UK navy blew up Nord Stream
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-says-british-navy-personnel-blew-up-nord-stream-gas-pipelines-2022-10-29/
GIST	<p>LONDON, Oct 29 (Reuters) - Russia's defence ministry said on Saturday that British navy personnel blew up the Nord Stream gas pipelines last month, a claim that London said was false and designed to distract from Russian military failures in Ukraine.</p> <p>Russia did not give evidence for its claim that a leading NATO member had sabotaged critical Russian infrastructure amid the worst crisis in relations between the West and Russia since the depths of the Cold War.</p> <p>The Russian ministry said that "British specialists" from the same unit directed Ukrainian drone attacks on ships of Russian Black Sea fleet in Crimea earlier on Saturday that it said were largely repelled by Russian forces, with minor damage to a Russian minesweeper.</p> <p>"According to available information, representatives of this unit of the British Navy took part in the planning, provision and implementation of a terrorist attack in the Baltic Sea on September 26 this year - blowing up the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 gas pipelines," the ministry said.</p> <p>Britain denied the claim.</p> <p>"To detract from their disastrous handling of the illegal invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Ministry of Defence is resorting to peddling false claims of an epic scale," the British defence ministry said.</p>

"This invented story, says more about arguments going on inside the Russian government than it does about the West."

Maria Zakharova, a spokeswoman for Russian foreign ministry, said Moscow will seek reaction from the U.N. Security Council saying on social media Moscow wanted to draw attention to "a series of terrorist attacks committed against the Russian Federation in the Black and Baltic Seas, including the involvement of Britain in them".

Russia, deeply isolated by Western nations since its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine, has previously blamed the West for the explosions that ruptured the Russian-built Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines on the bed of the Baltic Sea.

But it had not previously given specific details of who it thinks was responsible for the damage to the pipelines, previously the largest routes for Russian gas supplies to Europe.

A sharp drop in pressure on both pipelines was registered on Sept. 26 and seismologists detected explosions, triggering a wave of speculation about sabotage to one of Russia's most important energy corridors.

Reuters has not been able to immediately verify any of the conflicting claims about who was to blame for the damage.

PIPELINE MYSTERY

[Sweden and Denmark](#) have both concluded that four leaks on Nord Stream 1 and 2 were caused by explosions, but have not said who might be responsible. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has called the damage an act of sabotage.

Sweden has ordered [additional investigations](#) to be carried out into the damage done to the pipelines, the prosecutor in charge of the case said in a statement on Friday.

The Kremlin has repeatedly said allegations of Russian responsibility for the damage were "stupid" and Russian officials have said Washington had a motive as it wants to sell more liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Europe.

The United States has denied involvement.

The Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines have a joint annual capacity of 110 billion cubic metres - more than half of Russia's normal gas exports volumes.

Sections of the 1,224-km (760-mile) long pipelines, which run from Russia to Germany, lie at a depth of around 80-110 metres.

BLACK SEA FLEET

Russia said meanwhile that Ukrainian forces attacked ships from the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, the biggest city in Russian-annexed Crimea, in the early hours of Saturday.

"Nine unmanned aerial vehicles and seven autonomous marine drones were involved in the attack," the defence ministry said.

"The preparation of this terrorist act and the training of servicemen of the Ukrainian 73rd Special Center for Naval Operations were carried out under the guidance of British specialists located in the town of Ochakiv."

All the air drones were destroyed though minor damage was done to the minesweeper Ivan Golubets, the ministry said. Sevastopol is the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet.

HEADLINE	10/30 China cities brace: wave of fleeing workers
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinese-cities-brace-wave-foxconn-workers-covid-hit-zhengzhou-2022-10-30/
GIST	<p>BEIJING, Oct 30 (Reuters) - Cities in central China hastily drew up plans to isolate migrant workers fleeing to their hometowns from a vast assembly facility of iPhone maker Foxconn in COVID-hit Zhengzhou city, fearing the returnees may trigger coronavirus outbreaks.</p> <p>Zhengzhou, capital of Henan province, reported 167 locally transmitted COVID-19 cases in the seven days to Oct. 29, up from 97 infections in the prior seven-day period. Taiwan-based Foxconn, which has about 300,000 workers in Zhengzhou, has not disclosed the number of infected workers.</p> <p>Under China's ultra-strict zero-COVID policies, localities are mandated to act swiftly to quell any outbreaks, with measures that could include full-scale lockdowns. On Oct. 19, Foxconn banned all dining-in at canteens and required workers to take their meals in their dormitories, but assured that production was normal.</p> <p>Photographs and videos circulating widely on Chinese social media since Saturday showed Foxconn workers trekking across fields in the day and along roads at night. Reuters could not immediately verify the authenticity of the posts.</p> <p>In an apparent show of support, residents in the vicinity left bottled water and provisions next to major roads with signs such as: "For Foxconn workers returning home", according to social media posts.</p> <p>A Foxconn official had no immediate comment in response to Reuters queries.</p> <p>"They were Foxconn employees who escaped from the factory and were walking home," wrote a user of WeChat in a post about the social media images.</p> <p>"Some people were walking amid wheat fields with their luggage, blankets and quilts. I couldn't help but feel sad."</p> <p>Late on Saturday, cities near Zhengzhou including Yuzhou, Changge and Qinyang, as well as the Weiwei district and Xihua county in the city of Xuzhou, urged Foxconn workers to report to local authorities in advance about plans to return home.</p> <p>Returning workers are to travel "point-to-point" in pre-arranged vehicles en route, and are to be quarantined on arrival, they said in separate letters on their respective social media accounts addressed to Zhengzhou Foxconn workers.</p> <p>Xihua county said it was organising a special vehicle from Sunday to bring back directly from the Foxconn plant workers who were originally from the county, assuring them that they would not be turned away but that counter-epidemic measures needed to be observed.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Lebanon president leaves office amid crisis
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/president-aoun-leaves-office-lebanons-crisis-worsens-2022-10-30/
GIST	<p>BAABDA, Lebanon, Oct 30 (Reuters) - Michel Aoun, the 89-year-old Christian president who presided over Lebanon's cataclysmic financial meltdown and the deadly Beirut port blast, vacates the presidential palace on Sunday, leaving a void at the top of a failing state.</p>

Parliament has so far been unable to agree on a successor in the role, which has the power to sign bills into law, appoint new prime ministers and green-light government formations before they are voted on by parliament.

Like during more than half of Aoun's time in office, Lebanon is currently governed by a caretaker cabinet as the premier-designate has been trying for six months to form a government.

Dozens of supporters gathered at Baabda Palace to say farewell to Aoun, wearing the orange associated with his Free Patriotic Movement party and carrying portraits of him as president and from decades ago when he served as army commander.

One 73-year-old man in the army fatigues he wore when serving under Aoun in the civil war told Reuters he wished Aoun could have three more years in office.

Therese Younes, a 16-year-old who had come with other teenagers, said she had backed Aoun since she was eight and was sad to see him go.

"If I was 18 years old, I would have left the country. There's no Lebanon left after Michel Aoun," said Younes.

Aoun is a deeply divisive figure, adored by many Christians who viewed him as their defender in Lebanon's sectarian system but accused by critics of enabling corruption and helping armed group Hezbollah gain influence.

Aoun secured the presidency in 2016, endorsed by both Hezbollah and rival Maronite Christian politician Samir Geagea in a deal that brought then-leading Sunni politician Saad al-Hariri back as prime minister.

The six-year term that followed saw Lebanon's army fight off Islamist militants on the Syrian border in 2017 with Hezbollah's help, a new electoral law passed in 2018 and top energy companies begin exploratory drilling in offshore blocks in 2020.

In his final week in the palace, he signed onto a U.S.-mediated deal delineating Lebanon's southern [maritime border](#) with Israel.

His fans have hailed those achievements but his critics say those modest successes pale in comparison to the 2019 financial meltdown, which has pushed more than 80% of the population into poverty and prompted the widespread anti-government protests.

Aoun's term was also marked by the massive blast at the Beirut port in 2020 that killed more than 220 people. Aoun later said he had known about the chemicals stored there and referred the file to other authorities to take action. Victims' families said he should have done more.

He told Reuters in an [interview](#) on Saturday that his presidential powers were not wide enough to address the economic crisis.

"He was by far the worst president in Lebanon's history" said Michel Meouchi, a lawyer and father. "I prefer a void in the presidency to him."

Aoun's path to the presidency began in the 1975-1990 civil war, during which he served as commander of Lebanon's army and the head of one of two rival governments.

He returned to Beirut after 15 years in exile, once Syrian forces withdrew under international pressure following the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri.

In 2006, the FPM formed an alliance with Hezbollah, which lent important Christian backing to the armed group.

	<p>In his interview with Reuters, Aoun credited Hezbollah for its "useful" role in acting as a "deterrent" against any Israeli attacks during the maritime border talks.</p> <p>He said his departure on Sunday, one day before his term officially ends, was not the end of his political career.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 France: police clash with protesters
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/french-police-clash-with-protestors-farm-reservoir-site-2022-10-29/
GIST	<p>PARIS, Oct 29 (Reuters) - Clashes at a protest on Saturday against the construction of a large water reservoir for farm irrigation in western France left scores of police injured, the authorities said.</p> <p>France's worst drought on record this summer has sharpened debate over water resources in the European Union's biggest agricultural sector. Artificial reservoirs have been supported by some farmers as a way to use water efficiently, but have been decried by critics as outsized and favouring large farms.</p> <p>Several thousand opponents defied a ban on protesting at the planned reservoir in the rural district of Sainte-Soline, with French television showing protestors roaming across fields towards the fenced-off construction area and being repelled by tear gas.</p> <p>There were 61 injured, including 22 seriously, among the police who were attacked with fireworks and Molotov cocktails by some protestors, the local prefect said in a statement.</p> <p>French Agriculture Minister Marc Fesneau condemned on Twitter the violence against police and criticised protestors for "the intention to block a project developed locally over years."</p> <p>Green party officials who joined the protest blamed an excessive security presence that mobilised over 1,500 police.</p> <p>"All that to protect a water grab in the midst of a drought," lawmaker Sandrine Rousseau tweeted.</p> <p>Four protestors were injured and six arrested, the prefect said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Iran Guards warn protesters amid unrest
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-iran-middle-east-arrests-dubai-ff42dea543b6836bfb06f135950deee8
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard issued a new warning on Saturday to antigovernment protesters, even as demonstrations continued in cities and university campuses across the country for the sixth straight week.</p> <p>Also on Saturday, authorities reported that the gunman who killed 15 people at a major Shiite holy site in southern Iran earlier this week died in a hospital from injuries sustained during his arrest. Tehran has not disclosed details about the man who carried out Wednesday's attack on Shah Cheragh in Shiraz, Iran's second-holiest Shiite shrine.</p> <p>The militant Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the shooting. But Iran's government has tried to blame the attack on the largely peaceful protests roiling the country, without offering evidence. Amaq, the militant group's media arm, released a video on Saturday that purportedly shows the Shiraz attacker pledging allegiance to the group.</p>

The nationwide unrest — sparked by the Sept. 16 death of Mahsa Amini in the custody of the country's morality police — has rocked the Islamic Republic for a month and a half. Amini died after being detained for allegedly violating the country's strict Islamic dress code for women.

At the funeral for victims of the shooting attack in Shiraz, the chief of the Revolutionary Guard, Gen. Hossein Salami, appealed to Iranians to stop protesting. The Guard and other security forces have violently cracked down on demonstrations with live ammunition, anti-riot pellets and tear gas.

"Today is the end of the riots. Do not go to the streets anymore!" Salami said on Saturday as crowds thronged the coffins of the victims of the Shiraz attack. "We are telling our youth, the minority of you who have been deceived, stop the evil acts."

He added in the same harsh tone: "This ominous sedition will bring no happy ending to you. Do not ruin your future!"

Despite the threat, student associations reported protests at dozens of universities across the country on Saturday, from the capital of Tehran to the central cities of Isfahan and Yazd. Videos spread online show students chanting for freedom and the end of Iran's clerical rule.

At the Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences in the northwestern city of Sanandaj, the human rights group Hengaw reported that security forces opened fire on protesters, critically wounding a student.

[University campuses have become hotbeds of opposition](#), fueling the protest movement and prompting a harsh backlash from security forces.

The Iranian government has repeatedly [alleged that foreign powers have orchestrated the protests](#), without providing evidence. The protests have become one of the most serious threats to Iran's ruling clerics since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The protests first [focused on the state-mandated hijab, or headscarf, for women](#) but quickly grew into calls for the downfall of Iran's theocracy itself. At least 270 people have been killed and 14,000 have been arrested in the protests that have swept over 125 Iranian cities, according to the group Human Rights Activists in Iran.

A court in Tehran on Saturday heard the case of several protesters charged with "corruption on earth" — a term often used to describe attempts to overthrow the Iranian government that carries the death penalty. Judicial officials have announced charges against hundreds of people in Tehran and other provinces as they seek to quash dissent.

On Friday, Iranian security forces [opened fire on demonstrators](#) in the southeastern flash point city of Zahedan, killing at least two people, according to activists.

Zahedan, in Iran's long-restive Sistan and Baluchestan province, has seen the deadliest violence in protests so far. Activists estimate that in Zahedan alone, nearly 100 people have been killed since a Sept. 30 rally set off a violent police response.

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HEADLINE	10/29 Dilemma for police: permitless carry laws
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/gun-violence-united-states-kentucky-politics-louisville-0650ceb73d10b886d8053dc2b8ad6281
GIST	LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Police saw Carmon Tussey walking briskly toward a crowded Louisville bar carrying a semi-automatic weapon.

With people running away, officers moved in, service weapons drawn. They put the 26-year-old in handcuffs and confiscated his gun. Tussey was later charged with terroristic threatening, wanton endangerment and disorderly conduct, prosecutors said, and could face up to 20 years in prison.

His lawyer says he “was engaged in perfectly legal behavior” in the incident last year, raising a relatively new legal argument in the United States that now stands before the courts to settle.

That’s because Kentucky made it legal in 2019 to carry a gun in public without a permit, joining what is now a [majority of states](#) with similar laws.

Many celebrate the end of the bureaucracy erected around what they consider every American’s constitutional right to carry any firearm they want. But permitless carry laws have created a dilemma for officers working the streets: They now have to decide, sometimes in seconds, if someone with the right to carry a gun is a danger.

“Kentucky is one of the states that allows a citizen to ‘open carry’ – meaning it is perfectly legal to walk down a public street carrying a loaded gun out in the open,” said Tussey’s attorney, Greg Simms.

Louisville prosecutors say it was more than just the gun that led police to detain Tussey. The type of weapon, how he carried it, and where he was headed also mattered. A witness also told officers that Tussey was returning to the bar after a verbal altercation.

After he was detained, Tussey told police he “was returning to shoot” the people he fought with, according to the arrest citation. Those comments came later. Simms argued in court that he had given police no legal reason to take him into custody when they did.

The judge hasn’t been persuaded by that argument so far, saying in a preliminary ruling on evidence that police had other reasons to arrest Tussey at the time. But Simms says he thinks he can convince a jury that Tussey didn’t commit any crimes, in part because of Kentucky’s new law. His next hearing is Nov. 2.

Advocates say permitless carry makes people safer. Opponents say it makes it more dangerous for ordinary people, and for police officers.

“It’s no secret why so many law enforcement leaders are speaking out against permitless carry laws,” said John Feinblatt, president of Everytown for Gun Safety. “Allowing anyone to carry a gun anywhere makes the job of a police officer harder and more dangerous.”

Gun violence is up nationwide. There have been 35,000 deaths in the U.S. so far this year, following 45,000 deaths in 2020 and the same in 2021. About 79% of the killings in 2020 involved a firearm, the highest percentage since at least 1968.

Earlier this year, Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb signed an Indiana law removing the permit requirement for carrying a handgun in public even though Indiana’s state police superintendent had weighed in against it. The new law took effect July 1.

“We’re still expected to enforce our laws and take those guns off the streets and make sure people that aren’t supposed to have them don’t,” Indiana State Police spokesman Capt. Ron Galaviz said recently. “It’s just an extra couple of steps in that process.”

Under the new law, Galaviz said, officers can’t immediately grab a gun or ask to see a permit when they pull someone over.

Complaints about armed people in public settings can have a range of outcomes.

In Boise, Idaho, police got multiple “man with a gun” calls about 27-year-old Jacob Bergquist, who took a firearm to places they weren’t allowed, like a store, a hospital and a mall, according to The Idaho Statesman.

Idaho passed permitless carry in 2016, but the state allows property owners to ban them in specific locations. Boise Police Chief Ryan Lee said his officers never had grounds to arrest Bergquist under Idaho law.

Lee made that comment after Bergquist entered the Boise Towne Square Mall and fatally shot a 26-year-old security guard and a man, and wounded four others.

Bergquist, who died after exchanging gunfire with police, promoted gun rights on a YouTube channel.

In Houston, Guido Herrera walked into a mall in February with a rifle in one hand and a Bible in the other, wearing a leather mask and a shirt with the Punisher logo.

His lawyer, Armen Merganian, argued that Guido Herrera was just “a gun-loving Texan” who meant no harm. Jurors convicted him of a misdemeanor, disorderly conduct. It’s legal to carry loaded guns in public in Texas, but not in a manner calculated to alarm.

“Cops just like to assume that everyone is a bad guy and everyone is there to cause harm and that’s not necessarily the case. Some people just really enjoy their Second Amendment rights,” Merganian said.

In Florida, Michael Taylor films himself with guns and a fishing pole walking to piers and other spots to cast a line. He says he’s trying to educate people about Florida gun laws, which don’t allow a person to carry a gun without a permit but make exceptions if someone is hunting or fishing.

Sometimes Taylor’s actions lead to discussions about state gun laws. Other times they prompt ‘man with a gun’ calls to police.

Officers in Clearwater stopped Taylor last year as he walked down a crowded beach with a fishing pole, a “Don’t Tread On Me” flag and a loaded semi-automatic weapon, according to a video he posted to social media. Police ask what he’s doing and he tells them he’s going fishing and isn’t breaking any laws.

“Sir, you’re scaring everybody walking down the beach,” one officer says.

After cuffing him, the officers move him to a less crowded area, question him further and release him. He heads on down the crowded beach to the pier.

Shannon West, a training supervisor at the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training, which trains some 300 recruits a year, said that when responding to an armed person in public, officers have “got a very quick decision to make ... as to whether or not to intervene, when to intervene, and how.”

In one rare case this year, an Indiana man fatally shot a gunman who killed three people at a mall days after permitless carry took effect in the state. Authorities said the man who shot the gunman was legally armed and praised his actions for saving others’ lives.

That’s the type of scenario that gun rights advocates point to when they argue that the best way to stop a bad guy with a gun is to have a good guy with a gun on the scene.

But that still can create a dilemma for police when they arrive.

“It used to be if someone was carrying a firearm and they had a concealed carry permit, it would be less suspicious for them to have a firearm,” said UCLA law professor Adam Winkler, an expert on gun policy. “But when you eliminate the permit requirement, then anyone can carry a firearm on the streets and it becomes harder for police and for others to figure out whether that person has bad intent or not.”

HEADLINE	10/30 Attack on Speaker Pelosi's husband
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/arrests-california-san-francisco-1582f7f07e277d65ce445c39de9a8bca?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=TopNews&utm_campaign=posit ion_04
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A man broke into House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's home in San Francisco and severely beat her 82-year-old husband, Paul Pelosi, with a hammer early Friday while the Democratic lawmaker was in Washington.</p> <p>Paul Pelosi had surgery to repair a skull fracture and serious injuries to his right arm and hands, and his doctors expect a full recovery, the speaker's office said. In a letter to congressional colleagues Saturday night, Nancy Pelosi said her husband's condition "continues to improve."</p> <p>David DePape, 42, was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder, elder abuse and burglary, police said.</p> <p>"This was not a random act. This was intentional. And it's wrong," San Francisco Police Chief William Scott said.</p> <p>The violence was the latest jolt to an increasingly splintered political system that is riven with extremism.</p> <p>A look at what is known about the attack and the suspect:</p> <p>WHAT HAPPENED?</p> <p>An intruder wielding a hammer smashed his way through a rear door into the Pelosi residence in San Francisco shortly before 2:30 a.m. Friday. The man confronted Paul Pelosi and shouted, "Where is Nancy," according to a person familiar with the situation who was granted anonymity to discuss it.</p> <p>Paul Pelosi called 911 himself and when police arrived they found him struggling with the assailant. The man managed to strike Pelosi at least once with the hammer before he was tackled by officers and arrested, police said.</p> <p>Nancy Pelosi was in Washington at the time of the attack.</p> <p>HOW'S PAUL PELOSI DOING?</p> <p>He underwent surgery to repair a skull fracture and serious injuries to his right arm and hands, and his doctors expect a full recovery, the speaker's office said Friday. Other than Nancy Pelosi's letter to colleagues, there were no updates on his condition Saturday.</p> <p>Nancy Pelosi arrived in San Francisco late Friday. The couple has been married since 1963.</p> <p>In her letter, the speaker thanked colleagues for their prayers and warm wishes. "Our children, our grandchildren and I are heartbroken and traumatized by the life-threatening attack on our Pop," she wrote. "We are grateful for the quick response of law enforcement and emergency services, and for the life-saving medical care he is receiving."</p> <p>WHAT ARE INVESTIGATORS SAYING?</p> <p>Scott, the San Francisco police chief, said the attack was not a random act. "This was intentional," he said.</p> <p>Police didn't immediately confirm a motive, but three people with knowledge of the investigation told The Associated Press that the assailant targeted Pelosi's home.</p>

The FBI and Capitol Police are also part of the joint investigation.

WHO IS THE SUSPECT?

DePape was expected to be charged next week with attempted homicide, assault with a deadly weapon, elder abuse and burglary. After his arrest, he was taken to a hospital, where he remained as of Friday evening.

DePape posted frequently on social media, often making racist and rambling comments that included questioning the results of the 2020 election, defending former President Donald Trump and echoing QAnon conspiracy theories.

A two-decade resident of the San Francisco Bay Area, he was known locally as a pro-nudity activist who had picketed naked at protests against laws requiring people to be clothed in public.

He grew up in Powell River, British Columbia, before following an older girlfriend to California. He has three children with two women. Stepfather Gene DePape said the suspect had lived with him in Canada until he was 14 and had been a quiet boy.

“He was reclusive,” said Gene DePape. “He was never violent.”

HAVE OTHER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS BEEN THREATENED?

It’s been almost two years since the riot at the U.S. Capitol, when Trump supporters broke into the building and hunted for Pelosi and other members of Congress. Since then, threats to lawmakers and their families have increased sharply.

The U.S. Capitol Police investigated almost 10,000 threats to members last year, more than twice the number from four years earlier.

Lawmakers have pressed for better security, especially for their families and their homes outside of Washington. Security officials have promised to pay for upgrades to certain security systems and an increased Capitol Police presence outside Washington. But the vast majority of members are mostly on their own.

The attack on Paul Pelosi happened when Nancy Pelosi was out of town, which meant there was less of a security presence in their home.

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HEADLINE	10/30 Russia suspends Ukraine grain deal
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-europe-government-and-politics-3b563bd6f79f815c7e9f33505dd25334?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=TopNews&utm_campaign=position_02
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia announced Saturday that it will immediately suspend its implementation of a U.N.-brokered grain deal that has seen more than 9 million tons of grain exported from Ukraine during the war and has brought down soaring global food prices. Ukraine accused Russia of creating a world “hunger games.”</p> <p>The Russian Defense Ministry cited an alleged Ukrainian drone attack Saturday against Russia’s Black Sea Fleet ships moored off the coast of occupied Crimea as the reason for the move. Ukraine has denied the attack, saying that the Russians mishandled their own weapons.</p> <p>The Russian declaration came one day after U.N. chief Antonio Guterres urged Russia and Ukraine to renew the grain export deal, which was scheduled to expire on Nov. 19. Guterres also urged other</p>

countries, mainly in the West, to expedite the removal of obstacles blocking Russian grain and fertilizer exports.

The U.N. chief said the grain deal — brokered by the United Nations and Turkey in July — helps “to cushion the suffering that this global cost-of-living crisis is inflicting on billions of people,” his spokesman said.

U.N. officials were in touch with Russian authorities over the announced suspension.

“It is vital that all parties refrain from any action that would imperil the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which is a critical humanitarian effort that is clearly having a positive impact on access to food for millions of people,” said Guterres’ spokesman, Stephane Dujarric.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the Russian move “predictable.” He accused Moscow of “blockading” ships carrying grain since September. Currently, he said, 176 vessels are backed up at sea, carrying more than 2 million tons of food.

“This is a transparent attempt by Russia to return to the threat of large-scale famine in Africa and Asia,” Zelenskyy said Saturday in his nightly video address. He called for a tough response against Russia from international bodies like the U.N. and the G-20.

Ukraine’s Foreign Minister, Dmytro Kuleba, accused Russia of playing “hunger games” by imperiling global food shipments.

In Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the suspension was regrettable and urged “all parties to keep this essential, life-saving Initiative functioning.”

“Any act by Russia to disrupt these critical grain exports is essentially a statement that people and families around the world should pay more for food or go hungry,” Blinken said in a statement Saturday night. “In suspending this arrangement, Russia is again weaponizing food in the war it started, directly impacting low- and middle-income countries and global food prices, and exacerbating already dire humanitarian crises and food insecurity.”

Russia’s Foreign Ministry on Saturday accused British specialists of being involved in the alleged attack by drones on Russian ships in Crimea. Britain’s Defense Ministry had no immediate comment on the claim.

“In connection with the actions of Ukrainian armed forces, led by British specialists, directed, among other things, against Russian ships that ensure the functioning of the humanitarian corridor in question (which cannot be qualified otherwise than as a terrorist attack), the Russian side cannot guarantee the safety of civilian dry cargo ships participating in the Black Sea initiative, and suspends its implementation from today for an indefinite period,” the Russian statement said.

Ukraine’s Ministry of Infrastructure said that Ukraine has never threatened the Black Sea grain corridor which “is exclusively humanitarian in nature,” and would continue to try to keep shipments going. It said since the first ship left Odesa on Aug. 1, more than 9 million tons of food have been exported, including more than 5 million tons to African and Asian countries. As part of the U.N. World Food Program, it said, 190 thousand tons of wheat have been sent to countries where there is hunger.

Russia also requested a meeting Monday of the U.N. Security Council because of the alleged attack on the Black Sea Fleet and the security of the grain corridor, said Dmitry Polyansky, Russia’s first deputy representative to the U.N.

Russia’s agriculture minister said Moscow stands ready to “fully replace Ukrainian grain and deliver supplies at affordable prices to all interested countries.” In remarks carried by the state Rossiya 24 TV

channel, Dmitry Patrushev said Moscow was prepared to “supply up to 500,000 tons of grain to the poorest countries free of charge in the next four months,” with the help of Turkey.

Earlier Saturday, Ukraine and Russia offered differing versions on the Crimea drone attack in which at least one Russian ship suffered damage in Sevastopol, a key port on the Ukrainian peninsula annexed by Moscow in 2014.

The Russian Defense Ministry said a minesweeper had “minor damage” during an alleged pre-dawn Ukrainian attack on navy and civilian vessels docked in Sevastopol, which hosts the headquarters of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet. The ministry claimed Russian forces had “repelled” 16 attacking drones.

The governor of the Sevastopol region, Mikhail Razvozhayev, claimed the port saw a “massive attack” by air and sea drones. He provided no evidence, saying all video would be seized for security reasons.

But an adviser to Ukraine’s Interior Ministry claimed that “careless handling of explosives” had caused blasts on four warships in Russia’s Black Sea Fleet. Anton Gerashchenko wrote on Telegram that the vessels included a frigate, a landing ship and a ship that carried cruise missiles used in a deadly July attack on a western Ukrainian city.

In other developments on Saturday, Russian troops moved large numbers of sick and wounded comrades from hospitals in Ukraine’s southern Kherson region and stripped the facilities of medical equipment, Ukrainian officials said as their forces fought to retake the province.

Kremlin-installed authorities in the mostly Russian-occupied region have urged civilians to leave the city of Kherson, the region’s capital — and reportedly joined the tens of thousands who have fled to other Russia-held areas.

Zelenskyy said the Russians were “dismantling the entire health care system” in Kherson and other occupied areas.

“The occupiers have decided to close medical institutions in the cities, take away equipment, ambulances. just everything,” Zelenskyy said.

Kherson is one of four regions in Ukraine that Russian President Vladimir Putin illegally annexed last month and where he subsequently declared martial law. The others are Donetsk, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia.

As Kyiv’s forces sought gains in the south, Russia kept up its shelling and missile attacks in the country’s east. Three more civilians died and eight more were wounded in the Donetsk region, as Russian soldiers try to capture the city of Bakhmut, an important target in Russia’s stalled eastern offensive.

Russian shelling also hit an industrial building in Ukraine’s southern Zaporizhzhia region.

In the latest prisoner exchange, 50 Ukrainian soldiers, including two former defenders of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, and two civilians were released Saturday as part of a swap with Russia, who received 50 Russian soldiers, both sides reported.

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HEADLINE	10/30 SKorea Halloween party stampede kills 151
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/health-seoul-covid-south-korea-95c403f1712f8dbfab96e9da88366b03?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=TopNews&utm_campaign=positi on_01
GIST	SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Concerned relatives raced to hospitals in search of their loved ones Sunday as South Korea mourned the deaths of at least 151 people, mostly in their teens and 20s, who got trapped and crushed after a huge Halloween party crowd surged into a narrow alley in a nightlife district in Seoul.

Tens of thousands of people were believed to have gathered in Itaewon for festivities on Saturday night. Witnesses say the streets were so densely clogged with people and slow-moving vehicles that it was practically impossible for emergency workers and ambulances to reach the alley near Hamilton Hotel, as the situation quickly developed into one of the country's worst disasters in years.

There were concerns the death toll could grow as 24 people among the 104 being treated for injuries are in critical condition, according to Seoul City's disaster headquarters.

The city government said more than 2,600 people have called or visited a city office in nearby Hannam-dong as of Saturday afternoon, reporting their relatives as out of contact and asking officials to confirm whether they were among those injured or dead after the crush.

The dead included 19 foreigners, said Choi Seong-beom, chief of Seoul's Yongsan fire department. South Korea's Foreign Ministry did not confirm the nationalities of those victims, but it said that they alerted their countries' embassies in Seoul. The Chinese state news agency Xinhua said at least three Chinese nationals were killed.

The bodies of the dead were being kept at 42 hospitals in the capital, Seoul, and nearby Gyeonggi Province, according to Seoul City, which said it will instruct crematories to burn more bodies per day as part of plans to support funeral proceedings.

Around 100 businesses in the Hamilton Hotel area have agreed to shut down their shops through Monday to reduce the number of partygoers who would come to the streets through Halloween Day.

An estimated 100,000 people had gathered in Itaewon for the country's biggest outdoor Halloween festivities since the pandemic began and strict rules on gatherings were enforced. The South Korean government eased COVID-19 restrictions in recent months and this was the first big chance to get out and party for many young people.

While Halloween isn't a traditional holiday in South Korea, where children rarely go trick-or-treating, it's still a major attraction for young adults, and costume parties at bars and clubs have become hugely popular in recent years.

Itaewon, near where the former headquarters of U.S. military forces in South Korea operated before moving out of the capital in 2018, is an expat-friendly district known for its trendy bars, clubs and restaurants and it's the city's marquee Halloween destination.

Officials initially said 150 people were injured as of Sunday morning before later lowering their tally. National Fire Agency officials didn't immediately explain why the tally was reduced but said emergency workers would have had a more accurate idea of the casualties as rescue operations proceeded and that some of the injured would have been converted to deaths. It was also possible that some of those who were lightly injured had returned home overnight and were no longer counted.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared a national mourning period on Sunday and ordered flags at government buildings and public offices to fly at half-staff. During a televised speech, Yoon said supporting the families of the victims, including their funeral preparations, and the treatment of the injured would be a top priority for his government.

He also called for officials to thoroughly investigate the cause of the accident and review the safety of other large cultural and entertainment events, including regional festivals, to ensure they proceed safely.

"This is really devastating. The tragedy and disaster that need not have happened took place in the heart of Seoul amid Halloween (celebrations)," Yoon said during the speech. "I feel heavy hearted and cannot contain my sadness as a president responsible for the people's lives and safety."

After the speech, Yoon visited the Itaewon alley where the disaster occurred. Local TV footage showed Yoon inspecting the alley filled with trash and being briefed by emergency officials.

It was not immediately clear what led the crowd to surge into the narrow downhill alley near the Hamilton Hotel, a major party spot in Seoul. One survivor said many people fell and toppled one another “like dominos” after they were pushed by others. The survivor, surnamed Kim, said they were trapped for about an hour and a half before being rescued, as some people shouted “Help me!” and others were short of breath, according to the Seoul-based Hankyoreh newspaper.

Another survivor, Lee Chang-kyu, said he saw about five or six men push others before one or two began falling, according to the newspaper.

In an interview with news channel YTN, Hwang Min-hyeok, a visitor to Itaewon, said it was shocking to see rows of bodies near the hotel. He said emergency workers were initially overwhelmed, leaving pedestrians struggling to administer CPR to the injured lying on the streets. People wailed beside the bodies of their friends, he said.

Another survivor in his 20s said he avoided being trampled by managing to get into a bar whose door was open in the alley, Yonhap news agency reported. A woman in her 20s surnamed Park told Yonhap that she and others were standing along the side of the alley while others caught in the middle of the alley had no escape.

Choi, the fire department chief, said that bodies were being sent to hospitals or a gym, where bereaved family members could identify them. He said most of the dead and injured are in their 20s.

“Horrific news from Seoul tonight,” British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak tweeted. “All our thoughts are with those currently responding and all South Koreans at this very distressing time.”

Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security adviser, tweeted that reports of the disaster were “heartbreaking” and said Washington “stands ready to provide the Republic of Korea with any support it needs.”

The last South Korean disaster this deadly also hit young people the hardest. In April 2014, 304 people, mostly high school students, died in a ferry sinking. The sinking exposed lax safety rules and regulatory failures. It was partially blamed on excessive and poorly fastened cargo and a crew poorly trained for emergency situations. Saturday’s deaths will likely draw public scrutiny of what government officials have done to improve public safety standards since the ferry disaster.

It was also Asia’s second major crushing disaster in a month. On Oct. 1, police in Indonesia fired tear gas at a soccer match, causing a crush that killed 132 people as spectators attempted to flee.

More than 1,700 response personnel from across the country were deployed to the streets to help the wounded, including about 520 firefighters, 1,100 police officers and 70 government workers. The National Fire Agency separately said in a statement that officials were still trying to determine the exact number of emergency patients.

This was the deadliest crushing disaster in South Korean history. In 2005, 11 people were killed and around 60 others were injured at a pop concert in the southern city of Sangju.

In 1960, 31 people died after being crushed on the stairs of a train station as large crowds rushed to board a train during the Lunar New Year holidays.

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HEADLINE	10/29 Court rules in favor bikini baristas on dress
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/federal-judge-rules-in-favor-of-bikini-baristas-over-dress

GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. - A Washington city's dress code ordinance saying bikini baristas must cover their bodies at work has been ruled unconstitutional by a federal court.</p> <p>The decision in a partial summary judgment this week comes after a lengthy legal battle between bikini baristas and the city of Everett over the rights of workers to wear what they want, the Everett Herald reported. Everett is about 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of Seattle.</p> <p>U.S. District Court in Seattle found Everett's dress code ordinance violated the Equal Protection clauses of the U.S. and Washington state constitutions. The Court found that the ordinance was, at least in part, shaped by a gender-based discriminatory purpose, according to a 19-page ruling signed by U.S. District Judge Ricardo S. Martinez.</p> <p>It is difficult to imagine, the court wrote, how the ordinance would be equally applied to men and women in practice because it prohibits clothing "typically worn by women rather than men," including midriff and scoop-back shirts, as well as bikinis.</p> <p>Bikini baristas were "clearly" a target of the ordinance, the court also ruled, adding that the profession is comprised of a workforce that is almost entirely women.</p> <p>In 2017, the city enacted its dress code ordinance, requiring all employees, owners and operators of "quick service facilities" to wear clothing that covers the upper and lower body. The ordinance listed coffee stands, fast food restaurants, delis, food trucks and coffee shops as examples of quick service businesses.</p> <p>The owner of Everett bikini barista stand Hillbilly Hotties and some employees filed a legal complaint challenging the constitutionality of the dress code ordinance. They also challenged the city's lewd conduct ordinance, but the court dismissed all the baristas' claims but the dress code question.</p> <p>The court directed the city of Everett to meet with the plaintiffs within 14 days to discuss next steps.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Kirkland PD 'guns for gift cards exchange'
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/public-safety/kirkland-police-host-guns-gift-cards-exchange/281-c9a9479d-3af3-4f80-a397-0e51c7cead6e
GIST	<p>KIRKLAND, Wash. — For the third time this year, the Kirkland Police Department hosted a "Guns for Gift Cards Exchange" at its headquarters on Saturday.</p> <p>The goal is to make sure unwanted guns don't end up in the wrong hands.</p> <p>"Pretty cool idea, I would've did it for free but they're going to give us \$100, it's a bonus," said George Card.</p> <p>That's the reward for gun owners turning in unwanted weapons at the "Guns for Gift Cards Exchange" at the Kirkland Police Department.</p> <p>"They're old long guns that were in the closet, that the laws changed, you got to have them locked up, I don't own a gun safe, so I don't want the liability and they're safer here than at my house," said Card.</p> <p>Officials with KPD said Saturday's event is the third "Guns for Gift Cards Exchange" this year. Two previous events held over the summer saw Kirkland residents drop off more than 150 unwanted guns.</p> <p>"There's a possibility of a home, a family home could be burglarized, these guns could fall into the hands of the wrong individuals, criminals if you will, that now are going to take these guns and use them for the wrong reasons," said Cody Mann, the Training Sergeant with KPD.</p>

	<p>Mann said the gift cards range from \$25 to \$250, depending on the type of gun exchanged. Mann said KPD will review each gun's serial number, and unless it's found to be involved in a crime, it will be destroyed.</p> <p>"We have no issues with responsible gun owners, that want to maintain their firearms, either for hobbies, for hunting or for self-defense in anyway, but this situation is more about the people that are uncomfortable with these guns or just have no use for them anymore in their house," said Mann.</p> <p>Saturday's event ended with 46 guns collected, which Mann considers a huge success.</p> <p>"Even if it's just one gun that's taken off the streets, that would've been used for the wrong reasons and the wrong hands, it's worth it," said Mann.</p> <p>KPD officials said they also plan to do an in-person gun safety class before the end of the year.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Study: WA top real estate growth markets
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article267988882.html
GIST	<p>A recent study by SmartAsset, a financial technology company, has found which Washington state counties have seen the most home price increases over five years.</p> <p>The study found the top 10 counties that had the highest home price increases in Washington:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grays Harbor County- 110.53% 2. Cowlitz County- 87.12% 3. Spokane County- 81.72% 4. Lewis County- 74.16% 5. Thurston County- 71.74% 6. Whatcom County- 70.79% 7. Pierce County- 68.73% 8. Kitsap County- 68.67% 9. Franklin County- 68.36% 10. Garfield County- 67.27% <p>The study also evaluated property taxes paid, the change in property values throughout a five-year period and school ranking to find the locations where people are getting the most value for their property tax dollars.</p> <p>To find a per capita property tax amount for each county, SmartAsset calculated the number of households, average property tax rate and median home value. SmartAsset gives credit to the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Association of Realtors, Zillow and the Department of Education for its data.</p> <p>Student test scores were also analyzed to then give each county a score between one and 10, 10 being the best, based on the average test scores of districts in each county. Grays Harbor received a score of 10, Kitsap received a nine and Spokane and Lincoln counties both received a score of eight.</p> <p>Grays Harbor county had a home value growth of 110.53%, and ranked 783rd across the country. Spokane County also had a high home value growth of 81.72%, followed closely by Lewis County with 74.16%.</p> <p>Pierce county had a 68.73% home value growth, and scored a seven for school rankings. Whatcom County had a home value growth of 70.79%, and scored a six in school rankings. Thurston County received a nine in school rankings, and had a 71.74% home value increase.</p> <p>The recent increase in home values has also been seen statewide.</p>

	<p>According to Redfin's Washington Market Overview, home prices increased 6% from Sept. 2021 to Sept. 2022, reaching a median price of \$590,500.</p> <p>Redfin also looked at the metro areas with the fastest-growing sale prices between Sept. 2021 and Sept. 2022.</p> <p>The Mill Plain metro area near Vancouver, Wash., had the largest year-over-year growth, increasing by 42.6%. Richland, Aberdeen, Issaquah, Washougal, Snoqualmie, North Bend, Anacortes, Orting and Mukilteo were also among the top ten metro areas with the most growth, ranging from 32%-20% increase in sale prices.</p> <p>Zillow also reported an increase in home value in Washington. According to Zillow, the state saw a 13% increase in value compared to last year, with a current typical home value of \$613,674.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 In pandemic people still moved to Seattle
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/pandemic-didnt-stop-people-from-moving-to-seattle-census-data-shows/
GIST	<p>Seattle, like many other major U.S. cities, took a hit during the pandemic. For the first time in nearly 20 years, census data showed Seattle lost population from 2020 to 2021.</p> <p>Several factors contributed to the nationwide population losses, but the rise of remote work probably had the most profound impact. It freed up many workers to live farther away from urban employment hubs.</p> <p>But new data shows that even if a greater number of people have recently left Seattle, the pandemic didn't stop new folks from moving here.</p> <p>In 2021, there was basically no change in the number of people who moved to Seattle compared with 2019, according to the Census Bureau's annual American Community Survey.</p> <p>The data shows roughly 65,000 people residing in Seattle in 2021 had lived somewhere other than King County one year earlier. The Census Bureau data for 2019 shows roughly the same number — around 62,000 — had moved into town sometime within the past 12 months.</p> <p>Seattle benefited from a strong economy and job market, of course, but this data also suggests the city didn't lose its shine for many people from out of town during the pandemic.</p> <p>Of those new arrivals to Seattle, more than half — about 37,000 — came from another state. An additional 16,000 came from somewhere in Washington outside of King County, and around 11,000 moved from abroad. All these numbers are similar to those from 2019.</p> <p>The data shows there were also about 115,000 Seattle residents in 2021 who moved from within King County in the past year. Again, that's roughly the same as the estimated 113,000 intracounty movers living in Seattle in 2019. (Unfortunately, the Census Bureau does not separate those who moved within Seattle from those who moved into the city from somewhere else in King County).</p> <p>But there is one figure that does show significant change from 2019: The number of Seattleites who stayed put. In 2021, there were around 548,000 city dwellers who hadn't moved in the past year. That's down from 572,000 nonmovers in 2019 — a decline of around 24,000.</p> <p>And that would account for the city's overall drop in population from 2019 to 2021. The decline in the number of Seattle residents who'd already been living in the city for at least one year suggests that the pandemic did cause a spike in people moving away. Fortunately, the flow of people moving into the city remained strong in 2021, minimizing the population decline.</p>

	<p>The data shows around half of the newcomers to Seattle from outside of King County were white and half were people of color. Most were young adults — 63% were between 20 and 34 years old — and among those 15 and older, roughly 80% were unmarried. More than 70% of new arrivals lived in a rental unit.</p> <p>It's also worth noting that data from the Washington Office of Financial Management, which also produces population estimates, conflicts with census data, something that rarely happens. While the Census Bureau data shows a small decline in Seattle's population from 2020 to 2021, the state's numbers show a slight increase in the city's population. The Census Bureau and OFM have differences in methodology, and it's worth noting pandemic-related record-keeping difficulties could help explain the discrepancy.</p> <p>Data on movers to Seattle for 2020 isn't available, unfortunately. The Census Bureau did not release an American Community Survey for 2020, citing difficulties with data collection due to the pandemic.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Philippines flash floods, landslides: 45 dead
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/29/world/asia/philippines-storm-nalgae.html
GIST	<p>Flash flooding and landslides have left at least 45 people dead and nearly 20 others missing as Severe Tropical Storm Nalgae battered the Philippines, officials said on Saturday.</p> <p>Nalgae, called Paeng in the Philippines, made landfall early Saturday and was expected to continue barreling across the Southeast Asian nation over the weekend, bringing strong winds and torrential rain to large areas of the country — including Manila, the capital — the state weather agency said.</p> <p>Overnight, rescuers reached submerged villages on rubber boats and canoes, searching for stranded people and pulling bodies out of the water and mud left by the storm. Rescue operations continued during the day as the storm moved westward with maximum sustained winds of 59 miles per hour and gusts up to 99 m.p.h.</p> <p>By early afternoon, more than 409,000 people had been affected by the storm and 61,000 were displaced across the Philippines, according to the Department of Social Welfare and Development.</p> <p>Among the areas hardest hit was the southern autonomous region of Bangsamoro, where at least 40 were dead and more missing as a result of flash floods, the department said.</p> <p>“Our prayers go to the lives lost,” President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. wrote on Twitter on Friday. He also offered prayers “to those who continue to be gravely affected by this calamity,” and advised those in the path of the storm to take precautions.</p> <p>The Marcos administration said on Saturday that it had about 1.5 billion Philippine pesos, or about \$27 million, in relief funds available and that it would provide 4.1 million pesos, about \$72,000, to families affected by the storm. But local officials said that they needed more aid from the national government.</p> <p>In Bangsamoro, which is predominantly Muslim and relatively impoverished, more than 330,000 people had been affected by the storm in Cotabato City, said Bruce Matabalao, the mayor. Bangsamoro was under a state of emergency on Saturday.</p> <p>Even before making landfall, Nalgae had begun inundating villages, causing power outages in several cities and damaging hundreds of homes across the country on Friday, according to the country's disaster agency.</p> <p>More than 7,000 people had been pre-emptively evacuated, with hundreds of schools and offices closed and power in nine cities out by Friday afternoon, according to the country's disaster agency. But there was no emergency declared or issued in many regions of the Philippines, despite forecasts of the approaching storm.</p>

	<p>“I am deeply saddened by this tragedy that befell our country,” Senator Koko Pimentel said, adding that many local governments had been “caught by surprise.”</p> <p>The Philippines endures about 20 tropical storms annually on average. The country straddles the Pacific typhoon belt, an area of the western Pacific Ocean where many of the world’s tropical cyclones form. Last month, Super Typhoon Noru slammed the densely populated main island of Luzon. In April, more than 120 died after Tropical Storm equi pummeled the country.</p> <p>The most powerful storm to hit the country in recent history was Typhoon Haiyan, which ravaged the central Philippines in 2013 with winds of at least 150 m.p.h., storm surges and flooding that left about 6,500 people dead.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Ukraine electrical workers racing repairs
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/29/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#ukraines-electric-utility-struggles-to-repair-a-grid-under-constant-attack
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — The head of Ukraine’s national electric utility was standing on the street outside headquarters in central Kyiv two weeks ago when he heard a low rumble in the sky and saw a Russian attack drone for the first time. The power of the blast moments later was still evident on Friday in the blown-out windows and debris that littered the complex.</p> <p>“Unfortunately, they hit hard,” Volodymyr Kudrytskyi, the chief executive of Ukrenergo, said in an interview in his office.</p> <p>The drone that hit Ukrenergo’s headquarters was one of dozens of aerial attacks on Oct. 10 and the days after that destroyed 30 percent of the nation’s power stations. In the weeks since, Ukrainian electrical workers have been racing to make repairs, but it is a monumental challenge.</p> <p>“Virtually every day, they hit some target run by Ukrenergo,” he said. Unlike a hurricane or other natural disaster, the strikes on Oct. 10 were not a singular occurrence, but the start of a sustained campaign that Russian officials have said is meant to cause civilian suffering and force Ukraine to submit to the Kremlin’s will.</p> <p>Dmitri A. Medvedev, a former Russian president and prime minister and current deputy head of Russia’s Security Council, said in statement on Friday that Ukraine would regain energy stability only when it recognizes Russia’s demands as legitimate.</p> <p>President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine spoke to the nation from the darkened streets of Kyiv late Thursday. “We are not afraid of the dark,” he said. “The darkest times for us are not without light, but without freedom.”</p> <p>Mr. Zelensky, speaking on Friday night, said that some four million Ukrainians were now living with restrictions on power use. People in cities across the country are struggling with rolling power outages, the only way the country’s energy provider can prevent a “complete blackout.”</p> <p>More than 5,500 electrical maintenance workers are struggling to make repairs as quickly as they can under harrowing conditions, Mr. Kudrytskyi said.</p> <p>“Imagine, you are an employee maintaining a substation,” Mr. Kudrytskyi said. “You know it is a target.”</p> <p>The workers never know what they will find when they emerge from their bunkers.</p>

An alarm sounds and from the bunker workers can hear the roar of the explosion, he said, the power of the missile or drone compounded by the release of energy from the electrical equipment. A strange odor, which he compared to the smell of burned plastic, fills the air when the all clear is finally given.

Across the power plant, which he said can feel like its own small town, fires fueled by oil used in the machinery burn for hours. Alarms blare two or three times a day. And just as workers gather what is needed for repairs: boom, another explosion. Mr. Kudrytskyi said that at one plant, the building where the equipment for repairs was kept was hit.

“Everything gone,” he said. “It is really hard to imagine if you are not inside this horrible movie.”

The Russian targeting has been so precise that Mr. Kudrytskyi and other Ukrainian energy officials said that Moscow must be assisted by energy experts.

“I cannot imagine that military experts would know what combination of things needs to be hit to cause the most damage,” he said.

Ukraine has a robust energy system, Mr. Kudrytskyi said. Despite losing the power generated by the country’s largest nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia and the destruction to the grid in parts of the country where fighting is heavy, Ukraine was still exporting power a month ago. The missiles and drone strikes — which Mr. Kudrytskyi said started on Sept. 11 after the Russians were driven out of the Kharkiv region — ended that.

If the Russian attacks stopped today, he said, electrical workers could have power largely restored in under a month. But there is no sign they will end.

Five utility workers have been killed in strikes and dozens more wounded. Mr. Kudrytskyi said he remained amazed at the dedication of crews working to keep the lights on.

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HEADLINE	10/28 Report: inflation, wages continue rise
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/10/28/bureau-economic-analysis-september-report/9181666974103/
GIST	<p>Oct. 28 (UPI) -- Personal consumption expenditures, a key measure of inflation, continued to rise in September and wages also climbed, the Bureau of Economic Analysis reported Friday.</p> <p>The BEA released its personal income and outlays report for September, which shows the personal consumption expenditures index, which measures prices consumers paid for goods and services, rose by 0.3% over August and 6.2% from a year ago.</p> <p>The price of goods decreased 0.1%, reflecting a 2.4% decrease in energy prices, while services increased by 0.6% for the month. Food prices continued to increase, rising by 0.6% in September.</p> <p>Core PCE, which excludes volatile food and fuel, rose by 0.5% over August and 5.1% from a year ago, slightly below the Dow Jones estimate of 5.2%.</p> <p>Personal income increased by 0.4%, a total of \$78.9 billion, and disposable income increased by 0.4%, or \$71.3 billion. Increases in private wages and salaries led the uptick, BEA said.</p> <p>President Joe Biden said his administration's economic plan is showing progress after seeing the results of the BEA report Friday.</p> <p>The president feels headway is being made toward his goals, according to a statement released by the White House. Those goals include higher incomes, slowing inflation and economic growth, which the report reflects. The BEA report is a key measuring stick for the Federal Reserve.</p>

	<p>"We have more work to do," Biden said in the statement. "My plan will bring down prescription drug prices and energy costs starting next year. In January, seniors will see their Social Security checks increase by an average of \$140 a month even as their Medicare premiums go down -- the first time in a decade that has happened. Also starting in January, billion dollar companies will face a new requirement that they must pay taxes."</p> <p>Spending saw an increase, up \$94.7 billion for services and \$18.3 billion for goods. The leading services to generate the increase were utilities and housing. Prescription drug costs helped drive the increase in spending on goods. Vehicle costs were the next biggest factor.</p> <p>The Federal Reserve is expected to announce another interest rate increase in the next week. It would be the sixth rate hike this year. This has been used as a tool to rein in inflation.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Pending home sales drop 4th month in row
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/10/28/pending-home-sales-drop-fourth-consecutive-month/8371666978743/
GIST	<p>Oct. 28 (UPI) -- Potential or pending U.S. home sales fell by 10.2% in September, marking four consecutive months of decline, according to a monthly report issued Friday by the National Association of Realtors.</p> <p>All four major regions recorded month-over-month and year-over-year declines in transactions.</p> <p>Numbers are based on the Pending Home Sales Index, a forward-looking indicator of home sales based on contract signings. A sale is listed as pending when the contract has been signed but the transaction has not closed, though the sale usually is finalized within one or two months of signing.</p> <p>Year-over-year, pending transactions slid by 31%.</p> <p>The decline in pending home sales from August to September is the biggest drop since the immediate aftermath of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Economists had predicted a 4% decline, according to NBC.</p> <p>The decline comes amid surging mortgage rates as the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank looks to curb rising inflation.</p> <p>Average mortgage interest rates have surpassed 7%, rising to their highest level in 20 years, the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp. said Thursday.</p> <p>New home listings are also down compared to one year ago, with homeowners unwilling to give up 3% mortgage rates that they locked in to before this year's surge.</p> <p>"Persistent inflation has proven quite harmful to the housing market," NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun said in a statement.</p> <p>"The Federal Reserve has had to drastically raise interest rates to quell inflation, which has resulted in far fewer buyers and even fewer sellers."</p> <p>The mortgage rate increase has stagnated the housing market, and "many potential homebuyers are choosing to wait and see where the housing market ends up, pushing demand and home prices further downward," Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp. head economist Sam Khatar said in a statement.</p> <p>"The new normal for mortgage rates could be around 7% for a while. On a \$300,000 loan, that translates to a typical monthly mortgage payment of nearly \$2,000, compared to \$1,265 just one year ago -- a</p>

	difference of more than \$700 per month. Only when inflation is tamed will mortgage rates retreat and boost home purchasing power for buyers," Yun said.
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HEADLINE	10/28 Border crossing deaths reach record high
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/10/28/Mexico-border-migrants-patrol/9001666996224/
GIST	<p>Oct. 28 (UPI) -- At least 853 migrants have died trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border over the past 12 months, making fiscal year 2022 the deadliest year for migrants ever.</p> <p>According to CBS News, the numbers exceed the previous record of 546 migrant deaths in fiscal year 2021. However, because Border Patrol does not collect complete data on migrant deaths, the number is likely higher than 853.</p> <p>The trek to reach the U.S. is a dangerous one and poses many challenges for migrants fleeing from other countries. Many migrants have drowned in the Rio Grande river, perished due to extreme heat or died in falls from border barriers.</p> <p>In June 53 migrants were found dead inside a tractor-trailer in the deadliest human smuggling case in U.S. history. There was no water inside the trailer, which was also a refrigerated truck that did not have the air conditioning turned on.</p> <p>In a statement to CBS News, Cecilia Barreda, a spokeswoman for Customs and Border Protection (CBP), which oversees Border Patrol, said human smugglers have been endangering migrants' lives to make a profit.</p> <p>"Smuggling organizations are abandoning migrants in remote and dangerous areas, leading to a rise in the number of rescues but also tragically a rise in the number of deaths," Barreda said. "The terrain along the border is extreme, the summer heat is severe, and the miles of desert migrants must hike after crossing the border in many areas are unforgiving."</p> <p>The International Organization for Migration, a United Nations affiliated group, has called the U.S.-Mexico border "the deadliest land crossing in the world."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Spokane PD new response to 911 calls
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/spokane-police-department-new-process-911-responses/293-63857cb0-de53-44e5-8b72-af74b5b5df7b
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Changes are coming to how 911 calls are handled and dispatched in Spokane.</p> <p>And, depending on your emergency, the changes could impact how quickly police or firefighters respond to your call.</p> <p>The Spokane Police Department announced that they are making changes to how they respond to 911 calls starting this Monday.</p> <p>Starting on October 31st, Spokane Regional Emergency Communications (SREC) will still answer 911 calls, but only dispatch police and fire in urgent matters that impact people's safety.</p> <p>If a crime is in progress or someone is having a medical emergency, first responders will deploy.</p> <p>For calls that are not as urgent, the SREC dispatcher will stay on the line with the caller and forward their information to the correct department to check on later.</p>

"For the emergency case, where it's in progress, and there is an imminent threat, there should be no change to the way that those calls are processed. Where were the public may notice a difference is going to be in the lower acuity calls, perhaps the aspect left something that did happen," said Justin Lundgren, the Spokane assistant chief of police.

Police hope this change allows them to prioritize high demand situations.

SPD says it is navigating staffing shortages.

When the vaccine mandate is lifted on Monday, five unvaccinated firefighters who were working as dispatchers can now go back out on the streets, which means SREC will take on additional work.

"We're not making this change, because we were unhappy with the way things were, but because of staffing constraints that both organizations are actually the city and county organizations collectively have," Lundgren said. "This is the realignment of duties."

With the change, SPD says that people with non-urgent calls will have to be on hold for 2 to 3 minutes. This varies based on the call volume.

SREC says that they sometimes receive up to 80 9-1-1 calls an hour and police and fire dispatchers don't have the capacity to field all the calls.

SREC encourages people to use the crime check number for crimes that aren't an emergency at (509) 456-2233.

SREC is at 75% staffed for their operations and are looking to hire 20 to 25 people at the agency.

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HEADLINE	10/28 Flu season more severe than last 13yrs
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/10/28/flu-season-2022-cdc/
GIST	<p>Influenza is hitting the United States unusually early and hard, already hospitalizing a record number of people at this point in the season in more than a decade and underscoring the potential for a perilous winter of respiratory viruses, according to federal health data released Friday.</p> <p>While flu season is usually between October and May, peaking in December and January, it's arrived about six weeks earlier this year with uncharacteristically high illness. There have already been at least 880,000 cases of lab-confirmed influenza illness, 6,900 hospitalizations and 360 flu-related deaths nationally, according to data released Friday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One pediatric death has also been reported.</p> <p>Not since the 2009 H1N1 swine flu pandemic has there been such a high burden of flu, a metric the CDC uses to estimate a season's severity based on laboratory-confirmed cases, doctor visits, hospitalizations and deaths.</p> <p>"It's unusual, but we're coming out of an unusual COVID pandemic that has really affected influenza and other respiratory viruses that are circulating," said Lynnette Brammer, an epidemiologist who heads the CDC's domestic influenza surveillance team.</p> <p>Activity is high in the U.S. south and southeast, and is starting to move up the Atlantic coast.</p> <p>The CDC uses a variety of measures to track flu, including estimating the percentage of doctor's visits for flu-like illness. But given the similar symptoms that could include people seeking care for COVID-19 or RSV, another respiratory virus with similar symptoms, the laboratory data leave no doubt.</p>

“The data are ominous,” said William Schaffner, medical director for the nonprofit National Foundation for Infectious Diseases and a professor of infectious diseases at that Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. “Not only is flu early, it also looks very severe. This is not just a preview of coming attractions. We’re already starting to see this movie. I would call it a scary movie.”

Adding to his concern, he said, is that influenza vaccine acceptance is lagging behind where it usually is at this point in the season. “That makes me doubly worried,” he said. The high burden of flu “certainly looks like the start of what could be the worst flu season in 13 years.”

The number of flu cases this season is already one-eighth of last season’s total estimate of 8 to 13 million cases.

So far, flu vaccination rates in the United States are lower than they have been at this point in the season in the past few years. About 128 million doses of flu vaccine have been distributed so far, compared with 139 million at this point last year and 154 million the year before, according to the CDC.

The latest flu data comes as the nation’s strained public health system is grappling with multiple virus threats. Coronavirus cases are expected to increase as the country heads into colder weather and more people gather indoors. Children’s hospitals are filling up with a record number of kids infected with RSV.

The flu vaccine’s effectiveness in preventing a doctor’s visit, hospitalization or death is uneven from year to year, and in years past, has hovered between 40 and 60 percent, according to the CDC. But Brammer and others say this season’s vaccine is well matched against circulating strains. That offers a “little ray of sunshine” for what could be a bleak winter, Schaffner said.

Nationally, the predominant virus, a particularly nasty strain, H3N2, causes the worst outbreaks of the two types of influenza A viruses and two influenza B viruses that circulate among people. Seasons where H3N2 dominate typically result in the most complications, especially for the very young, the elderly and people with certain chronic health conditions, experts say.

Influenza has not been a serious problem the last two years, experts and health officials have said, because of the masking, social distancing and other measures people took to protect themselves against COVID-19.

Health officials tend to consider a flu season to be officially underway after consecutive weeks of flu activity from several surveillance systems, including a significant percentage of doctor’s office visits for flu-like illnesses. Those doctor visits have increased for three weeks in a row as of Oct. 22, more than a month earlier than previous seasons, the CDC’s Brammer said.

Flu is famously difficult to predict. It’s hard to know how long the season will last, how severe it might be, and if different parts of the country will experience different levels of respiratory disease at different times. Last season, flu activity peaked in January, “then dropped like a stone, then smoldered just under the epidemic threshold beyond March into April, May and June,” said Schaffner. That “long smoldering tail was very unusual.”

“An early start doesn’t always mean severe,” Brammer said.

In the southern hemisphere, influenza season has also been far different, Brammer said. In Australia, there was a “really sharp, very fast uptake then very quick drop,” she said. In Argentina, the peak flu activity occurred at what would have been that country’s summer.

Chile got ahead of its bad flu season, which began months earlier than a typical season, by rapidly vaccinating 88 percent of its high-risk population before peak influenza activity, according to a CDC report this week. The flu vaccine used in Chile, which included a match for the dominant H3N2 virus, was about 50 percent effective in preventing hospitalization. The shot used in the Northern Hemisphere

includes the same virus makeup as the Southern Hemisphere vaccine, so experts hope the formulation might be similarly effective in preventing severe influenza illnesses.

“Things have not settled back into a normal pattern,” Brammer said.

The latest CDC data show overall respiratory illness activity is “very high” in South Carolina and Washington, D.C. and “high” in 11 states: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York City, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

Texas was among the earliest states to see flu activity in late September. At the Houston Methodist hospital system, laboratory-confirmed influenza cases have risen to 975 as of Oct. 20, up from 561 the week before, officials said.

Officials had been bracing for a more robust flu season this fall and winter because so many people have dropped COVID protection measures and are reluctant to get vaccinated.

“This was something that we were expecting because we are a hub, and a lot of people are traveling here,” said Cesar Arias, the hospital system’s chief of infectious diseases. “I didn’t expect to see that much [flu] that early.”

Arias said conversations around flu vaccinations have become tied to the hesitancy around coronavirus vaccines. The conversations in Texas, “as you can imagine, [are] stronger and at least more vocal,” he said. “We are struggling with that, trying to put the message out to get vaccinated.”

People need to get a new flu vaccine every year to be protected, and it takes up to two weeks for protection to kick in and for the vaccine to work. Flu is contagious before symptoms start. CDC recommends that everyone ages 6 months and older get a flu vaccine, ideally by the end of October.

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HEADLINE	10/28 Third Covid winter could be a ‘variant soup’
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/why-our-third-covid-winter-could-be-a-variant-soup-but-also-less-severe/
GIST	<p>The third winter of COVID-19 is approaching. This year, along with cold weather, heightened transmission and a host of other respiratory infections are on their way.</p> <p>For the most part, we know the drill: Mask up in crowded, indoor spaces. Test regularly. Ventilate spaces. Isolate if sick. Get vaccinated.</p> <p>But with lagging booster rates and Washington’s COVID state of emergency set to expire Monday, state Secretary of Health Dr. Umair A. Shah said that “now is the time to take action.”</p> <p>“Two-plus years in, we’re still talking about COVID,” Shah said on Thursday. “... And now is the time to get your flu shot, COVID vaccine or booster. We have to do everything we can to get ready for the upcoming respiratory season.”</p> <p>It’s still too early to say how bad this winter’s surge will be, but projections indicate one is certainly on its way, said Dr. Larry Corey, former president and director of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center who has led groundbreaking research on herpes, HIV and COVID treatment.</p> <p>Corey was also recently awarded the Infectious Diseases Society of America’s Alexander Fleming Award for Lifetime Achievement. During last week’s ceremony in Washington, D.C., Corey’s longtime friend and colleague Dr. Anthony Fauci, chief medical adviser to President Joe Biden, presented the award and acknowledged his decades of work developing antivirals, organizing clinical trials and researching vaccines.</p>

Among his greatest accomplishments is testing the drug acyclovir, the first antiviral medication used to treat herpes; building out the global AIDS Clinical Trials Group; and coordinating massive trials of several COVID vaccine candidates in 2020.

This week, Corey and state Department of Health leaders sat down to help answer some of the most pressing questions about what to expect from COVID in the coming months.

What's going on with COVID in Washington right now?

With the exception of a slight bump in cases in early September, the state's COVID cases have been [gradually decreasing](#) since midsummer.

As of mid-October, the state reported a seven-day rate of about 57.5 infections per 100,000 people and 3.4 hospitalizations per 100,000. The death count, which lags cases and hospitalizations, is about 0.5 deaths per 100,000, or about six deaths per day.

In comparison, the state saw over 1,800 infections per 100,000 over seven days at the peak of the omicron surge in January.

Is another COVID spike on its way?

While Corey said another winter surge is very likely, there's a good chance it'll be shorter than past ones. While last year's summer spike of the delta variant lasted four to five months and omicron's winter wave lasted about three months, Corey predicted seeing numbers rise for about two months or so this year.

"But we're still going to see the virus infect more people, especially high-risk people, and you're going to see vaccine breakthroughs," he said. "For people who are not boosted — there's hasn't been a lot of enthusiasm for boosting — you're going to see a lot of sickness."

What are some factors that might determine how long a wave lasts?

Population immunity and the outcome of competing variants and subvariants are two main factors that help experts predict the length of the next surge, Dr. Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, the state's chief science officer, said during a news briefing this week.

While the evolution of variants is largely unpredictable, we do have control over increasing population immunity through vaccination, he said.

Because so many people were infected by the omicron variant or one of its subvariants last winter and spring, they've likely built up some immunity against severe infections, Corey added.

How might this year be different or similar to past pandemic winters?

One of the most noticeable differences this year is that Washington no longer requires face masks in most indoor settings, with the exception of health care and correctional facilities. In the Seattle area, grocery stores, schools, sports games, restaurants and bars are increasingly filled with unmasked people — which has contributed to higher-than-normal respiratory infections this fall, Corey said.

"We knew it worked against influenza and other respiratory diseases," Corey said. "And it still works. There's stigmatization and confusion, but there should be no confusion over whether masking works."

Subvariants on the horizon are also presenting a new challenge. This year, instead of a single variant to watch out for, multiple variants have emerged in what some experts are calling a "variant soup" — each with a fairly strong ability to evade immunity.

What variants are starting to surge in other countries? What about here?

In Washington, omicron's subvariant BA.5 has been the dominant variant for months, making up about 78% of all circulating variants. A few others, including BF.7, BA.4.6 and BA.2.75, are also in the state, but Kwan-Gett said none is showing signs yet of emerging as the next dominant subvariant.

About a month ago, BA.2.75 took off in South Asia while BA.4.6 and BA.7 have been picking up steam, according to [The Washington Post](#). Another omicron subvariant, BQ.1.1, started picking up a few weeks ago and could be a contender to take over in Europe and North America. Scientists are also on the lookout for another lineage called XBB, the Post reported.

Generally, how are we doing?

Things are OK, but not great, Corey said. While people have learned to test for COVID, isolate, distance, wear masks and seek medical attention when necessary, action on the federal and international levels has slowed, he said.

“We could create better vaccines,” Corey said. “But that requires funds and pushing, and we’re not seeing that. So you’re starting to see the infrastructure we built for COVID start to go away.”

Clinical trials are smaller. Work on developing new monoclonal antibodies is lagging. Federal funding has run out.

“Get boosted,” he said. “... I see it causing no harm. It can only help. I think the cards here are that the virus is continuing to evolve and it’s still creating a significant amount of disease, so all the tools we have are needed.”

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HEADLINE	10/28 King Co. research students' mental health?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/king-county-seattle-childrens-proposed-broad-study-on-kids-screened-for-mental-health/
GIST	<p>Since King County began screening schoolkids for mental health and other risks, officials have been adamant: They’re respecting student privacy and not conducting research on them.</p> <p>But in April, the program’s coordinator was emailing school district officials with a new ask: The county and Seattle Children’s were seeking a grant to do a “research study” on high school students beginning in 2024, and they wanted letters of support, according to records reviewed by The Seattle Times.</p> <p>Only a month earlier, the coordinator, Margaret Soukup, stressed in an interview with The Times that King County and Seattle Children’s were only evaluating the program to improve it. “What I know is we are not doing research,” she said in March.</p> <p>King County did not address why Soukup said there was no research while simultaneously laying the groundwork to do so. Katie Rogers, a county spokeswoman, said in a statement that “we contacted schools to gauge interest in doing further evaluation to understand the impacts” of the program, an adaptation of a process called SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment, pronounced ESS-birt).</p> <p>Seattle Children’s and King County said they aren’t moving forward with what they dubbed the “SPIRIT Study.” “After a competitive process, the proposal was not selected for funding,” Children’s said in a statement attributed to Dr. Cari McCarty, a research professor there who is also the principal investigator for evaluating King County’s SBIRT program.</p> <p>Had they pursued the study, King County and Children’s said, it would have undergone the standard ethics review for research.</p> <p>As with King County’s SBIRT program, the proposed study would have relied on a screening tool custom-built for King County to collect some of the most sensitive information in kids’ lives, from suicide attempts to gender identity. Calling the program “novel,” the county hired a team led by McCarty to evaluate how well it works for the more than 20,000 students who have been screened.</p>

A [Times investigation](#) in August found school protocols could put student privacy at risk, while some ethics scholars questioned whether the program crossed into research — despite a [determination](#) from a Seattle Children’s review board that it didn’t.

The revelation that King County and Seattle Children’s proposed conducting a research study on students participating in SBIRT raises fresh questions about the intent behind the program. Formal research generally requires that participants or their parents provide informed consent, a high bar that often limits how many join a study.

Because the screening program is voluntary and was determined not to be research, schools have not been required to obtain signed consent from parents for their kids to participate. Most districts offer parents the option to opt their kids out.

As schools prepare for a fifth year of screening, some broader goals of the \$30 million initiative are coming into focus. A [paper](#) published earlier this month found a small sample of King County students who participated in the screening felt more connected to adults at school after a brief intervention with a school staffer, a measure it said is associated with lower risk for substance use and higher academic achievement.

The paper was part of a series of studies in the Journal of Adolescent Health that aim to “buttress the evidence base” for screening youth, according to an [accompanying editorial](#).

For the research study King County and Seattle Children’s had proposed, each school would pick two grade levels to be screened and “eligible students would be invited to join the research study.” Participating schools would get an extra \$60,000 a year to help recruit students for the two-year study, according to a [summary](#) shared with school districts. One grade level would receive an in-person intervention, and the other group would receive computerized feedback.

Leading the study would have been McCarty, who occupies an unusual role as principal investigator evaluating the SBIRT program and the [co-creator of its central feature](#) — a screening tool called “Check Yourself” that has also been central to her research agenda outside of King County schools.

McCarty was subject to a conflict-of-interest [management plan](#) for her financial interest in Check Yourself at the time King County hired her to [evaluate the program](#). She has said she never received pay related to the licensing of Check Yourself and has given up rights to any future compensation, and Seattle Children’s affirmed that she no longer has any conflicts.

There is no question that screening kids has the potential to discover their internal turmoil that might not otherwise come to light, an increasing focus of schools as the suicide rate for kids ages 10 to 14 doubled from 2011 to 2020, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Schools have praised the program for revealing student struggles, and some students have said screening shows their schools care about them.

In exchange for county money — Seattle Public Schools received [\\$1.1 million](#) for three years — school districts share data on student responses and feedback on the program. All schools have to use Check Yourself, owned by Seattle Children’s and licensed to a for-profit Canadian company called Tickit Health.

Check Yourself is administered in 11 school districts and one private school, Kennedy Catholic High School in Burien. (Lake Washington School District [ended its participation](#), saying it has adopted a different model to tend to student mental health).

The digital [questionnaire](#) transmits student responses to Tickit, under [contract](#) with King County, which replaces student names with distinct identifiers. Schools can access Tickit’s platform for student answers and link them back to student names, which only schools are supposed to know.

Privacy experts, however, have voiced alarm at how the data is collected and shared. Even without names, they say, the data contains enough demographic information, including grade, ethnicity, language spoken, and details that students write in like the name of a pet or sibling, that individuals could be identified.

Adding to those concerns, all school districts, with the exception of Highline, consider the nameless student responses to be a public record anyone can obtain, and five districts provided it with few or no redactions, The Times [reported](#) in August.

While [conventional SBIRT](#) focuses on substance use, King County takes a broader approach — asking about student risks and strengths and collecting information on their use of illegal drugs, sexual orientation and family conflict.

McCarthy said in an online presentation last week that youths who identify as transgender or nonbinary “were at hugely increased risk across the board.” Asking these questions, she said, is “a way to provide context to what the student may be going through identity-wise.”

The Seattle Children’s-led [paper](#) published in early October also included findings from a focus group of 26 students, saying they preferred to be screened in a classroom with other students.

But student-response data reviewed by The Times indicate that not all students feel this way.

“The large font size and answers makes it difficult to write things down in a large room full of peers,” a Tahoma School District student wrote. “Any person behind me can see these questions and answers that are supposed to be private.”

Seattle Children’s, in a statement attributed to McCarthy, said that this concern didn’t come up in the focus groups and recommended that proctors “remind students to keep their eyes on their own screens, and consider the setup of the screening space to ensure confidentiality.”

King County awarded Seattle Children’s \$588,000 to [evaluate the SBIRT program](#) and has so far published [one report](#) on middle school students, apart from the academic paper. In July, the evaluation team received an [additional \\$152,000](#) to deliver a “four-year culmination report” to include high schools.

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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	10/31 White House ransomware summit
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/technology-european-union-business-christopher-wray-wally-adeyemo-aff98eba1c7470f9b0128c882971547d
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House is bringing together three dozen nations, the European Union and a slew of private-sector companies for a two-day summit starting Monday that looks at how best to combat ransomware attacks.</p> <p>The second International Counter Ransomware Summit will focus on priorities such as ensuring systems are more resilient to better withstand attacks and disrupt bad actors planning such assaults.</p> <p>A senior Biden administration official cited recent attacks such as one that targeted the Los Angeles school district last month to underscore the urgency of the issue and the summit. The official previewed the event on the condition of anonymity.</p> <p>Among the administration officials planning to participate in the event are FBI Director Christopher Wray, national security adviser Jake Sullivan, Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo and Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman. President Joe Biden is not expected to attend.</p>

	<p>Participating countries are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, the European Commission, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.</p> <p>Companies that will take part include Crowdstrike, Mandiant, Cyber Threat Alliance, Microsoft, Cybersecurity Coalition, Palo Alto, Flexxon, SAP, the Institute for Security + Technology, Siemens, Internet 2.0, Tata – TCS and Telefónica.</p> <p>The previous summit took place virtually.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/31 DHS's plan to police disinformation
SOURCE	https://theintercept.com/2022/10/31/social-media-disinformation-dhs/
GIST	<p>Key Takeaways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Though DHS shuttered its controversial Disinformation Governance Board, a strategic document reveals the underlying work is ongoing. ▪ DHS plans to target inaccurate information on “the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic and the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines, racial justice, U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the nature of U.S. support to Ukraine.” ▪ Facebook created a special portal for DHS and government partners to report disinformation directly. ▪ The work is primarily done by CISA, a DHS sub-agency tasked with protecting critical national infrastructure. ▪ DHS, the FBI, and several media entities are having biweekly meetings as recently as August. ▪ DHS considered countering disinformation relating to content that undermines trust in financial systems and courts. ▪ The FBI agent who primed social media platforms to take down the Hunter Biden laptop story continued to have a role in DHS policy discussions. <p>THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY is quietly broadening its efforts to curb speech it considers dangerous, an investigation by The Intercept has found. Years of internal DHS memos, emails, and documents — obtained via leaks, Freedom of Information Act requests, and an ongoing lawsuit, as well as public reports — illustrate an expansive effort by the agency to influence tech platforms.</p> <p>The work, much of which remains unknown to the American public, came into clearer view earlier this year when DHS announced a new “Disinformation Governance Board”: a panel designed to police misinformation (false information spread unintentionally), disinformation (false information spread intentionally), and malinformation (factual information shared, typically out of context, with harmful intent) that allegedly threatens U.S. interests. While the board was widely ridiculed, immediately scaled back, and then shut down within a few months, other initiatives are underway as DHS pivots to monitoring social media now that its original mandate — the war on terror — has been wound down.</p> <p>Behind closed doors, and through pressure on private platforms, the U.S. government has used its power to try to shape online discourse. According to meeting minutes and other records appended to a lawsuit filed by Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt, a Republican who is also running for Senate, discussions have ranged from the scale and scope of government intervention in online discourse to the mechanics of streamlining takedown requests for false or intentionally misleading information.</p> <p>“Platforms have got to get comfortable with gov’t. It’s really interesting how hesitant they remain,” a DHS official texted a representative from Microsoft in February.</p> <p>In a March meeting, Laura Dehmlow, an FBI official, warned that the threat of subversive information on social media could undermine support for the U.S. government. Dehmlow, according to notes of the</p>

discussion attended by senior executives from Twitter and JPMorgan Chase, stressed that “we need a media infrastructure that is held accountable.”

“We do not coordinate with other entities when making content moderation decisions, and we independently evaluate content in line with the Twitter Rules,” a spokesperson for Twitter wrote in a statement to The Intercept.

There is also a formalized process for government officials to directly flag content on Facebook or Instagram and request that it be throttled or suppressed through a [special Facebook portal](#) that requires a government or law enforcement email to use. At the time of writing, the “content request system” at [facebook.com/xtakedowns/login](#) is still live. DHS and Meta, the parent company of Facebook, did not respond to a request for comment. The FBI declined to comment.

DHS’s mission to fight disinformation, stemming from concerns around Russian influence in the 2016 presidential election, began taking shape during the 2020 election and over efforts to shape discussions around vaccine policy during the coronavirus pandemic. Documents collected by The Intercept from a variety of sources, including current officials and publicly available reports, reveal the evolution of more active measures by DHS.

According to a draft copy of DHS’s Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, DHS’s capstone report outlining the department’s strategy and priorities in the coming years, the department plans to target “inaccurate information” on a wide range of topics, including “the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic and the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines, racial justice, U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the nature of U.S. support to Ukraine.”

“The challenge is particularly acute in marginalized communities,” the report states, “which are often the targets of false or misleading information, such as false information on voting procedures targeting people of color.”

The inclusion of the 2021 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan is particularly noteworthy, given that House Republicans, should they take the majority in the midterms, have vowed to investigate. “This makes Benghazi look like a much smaller issue,” [said](#) Rep. Mike Johnson, R-La., a member of the Armed Services Committee, adding that finding answers “will be a top priority.”

How disinformation is defined by the government has not been clearly articulated, and the inherently subjective nature of what constitutes disinformation provides a broad opening for DHS officials to make politically motivated determinations about what constitutes dangerous speech.

DHS justifies these goals — which have expanded far beyond its original purview on foreign threats to encompass disinformation originating domestically — by claiming that terrorist threats can be “exacerbated by misinformation and disinformation spread online.” But the laudable goal of protecting Americans from danger has often been used to conceal political maneuvering. In 2004, for instance, DHS officials faced pressure from the George W. Bush administration to heighten the national threat level for terrorism, in a bid to influence voters prior to the election, [according](#) to former DHS Secretary Tom Ridge. U.S. officials have routinely lied about an array of issues, from the causes of its wars in Vietnam and [Iraq](#) to their more recent obfuscation around the role of the National Institutes of Health in funding the Wuhan Institute of Virology’s coronavirus research.

That track record has not prevented the U.S. government from seeking to become arbiters of what constitutes false or dangerous information on inherently political topics. Earlier this year, Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a law known by supporters as the “Stop WOKE Act,” which bans private employers from workplace trainings asserting an individual’s moral character is privileged or oppressed based on his or her race, color, sex, or national origin. The law, critics charged, amounted to a broad suppression of speech deemed offensive. The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, or FIRE, has since filed a lawsuit against DeSantis, alleging “unconstitutional censorship.” A federal judge temporarily blocked parts of the Stop WOKE Act, ruling that the law had violated workers’ First Amendment rights.

“Florida’s legislators may well find plaintiffs’ speech ‘repugnant.’ But under our constitutional scheme, the ‘remedy’ for repugnant speech is more speech, not enforced silence,” wrote Judge Mark Walker, in a colorful opinion castigating the law.

The extent to which the DHS initiatives affect Americans’ daily social feeds is unclear. During the 2020 election, the government flagged numerous posts as suspicious, many of which were then taken down, documents cited in the Missouri attorney general’s [lawsuit](#) disclosed. And a 2021 report by the Election Integrity Partnership at Stanford University found that of nearly 4,800 flagged items, technology platforms took action on 35 percent — either removing, labeling, or soft-blocking speech, meaning the users were only able to view content after bypassing a warning screen. The [research](#) was done “in consultation with CISA,” the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

Prior to the 2020 election, tech companies including Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, Discord, Wikipedia, Microsoft, LinkedIn, and Verizon Media met on a monthly basis with the FBI, CISA, and other government representatives. According to NBC News, the meetings were part of an initiative, still ongoing, [between the private sector and government](#) to discuss how firms would handle misinformation during the election.

The stepped up counter-disinformation effort began in 2018 following high-profile [hacking incidents](#) of [U.S. firms](#), when Congress passed and President Donald Trump signed the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Act, forming a new wing of DHS devoted to protecting critical national infrastructure. An [August 2022 report](#) by the DHS Office of Inspector General sketches the rapidly accelerating move toward policing disinformation.

From the outset, CISA boasted of an “evolved mission” to monitor social media discussions while “routing disinformation concerns” to private sector platforms.

In 2018, then-DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen created the Countering Foreign Influence Task Force to respond to election disinformation. The task force, which included members of CISA as well as its Office of Intelligence and Analysis, generated “threat intelligence” about the election and notified social media platforms and law enforcement. At the same time, DHS began notifying social media companies about voting-related disinformation appearing on social platforms.

In 2019, DHS created a separate entity called the Foreign Influence and Interference Branch to generate more detailed intelligence about disinformation, the inspector general [report shows](#). That year, its staff grew to include 15 full- and part-time staff dedicated to disinformation analysis. In 2020, the disinformation focus expanded to include Covid-19, according to a [Homeland Threat Assessment](#) issued by Acting Secretary Chad Wolf.

This apparatus had a dry run during the 2020 election, when CISA began working with other members of the U.S. intelligence community. Office of Intelligence and Analysis personnel attended “weekly teleconferences to coordinate Intelligence Community activities to counter election-related disinformation.” According to the IG report, meetings have continued to take place every two weeks since the elections.

Emails between DHS officials, Twitter, and the Center for Internet Security [outline the process](#) for such takedown requests during the period leading up to November 2020. Meeting notes show that the tech platforms would be [called upon](#) to “process reports and provide timely responses, to include the removal of reported misinformation from the platform where possible.” In practice, this often meant state election officials sent examples of potential forms of disinformation to CISA, which would then forward them on to social media companies for a response.

Under President Joe Biden, the shifting focus on disinformation has continued. In January 2021, CISA [replaced](#) the Countering Foreign Influence Task force with the “Misinformation, Disinformation and Malinformation” team, which was created “to promote more flexibility to focus on general MDM.” By

now, the scope of the effort had expanded beyond disinformation produced by foreign governments to include domestic versions. The MDM team, according to one CISA official quoted in the IG report, “counters all types of disinformation, to be responsive to current events.”

Jen Easterly, Biden’s appointed director of CISA, swiftly made it clear that she would continue to shift resources in the agency to combat the spread of dangerous forms of information on social media. “One could argue we’re in the business of critical infrastructure, and the most critical infrastructure is our cognitive infrastructure, so building that resilience to misinformation and disinformation, I think, is incredibly important,” said Easterly, speaking at a conference in November 2021.

CISA’s domain has gradually expanded to encompass more subjects it believes amount to critical infrastructure. Last year, The Intercept [reported](#) on the existence of a series of DHS field intelligence reports warning of attacks on cell towers, which it has [tied to](#) conspiracy theorists who believe 5G towers spread Covid-19. One intelligence report [pointed out](#) that these conspiracy theories “are inciting attacks against the communications infrastructure.”

CISA has [defended](#) its burgeoning social media monitoring authorities, stating that “once CISA notified a social media platform of disinformation, the social media platform could independently decide whether to remove or modify the post.” But, as documents revealed by the Missouri lawsuit show, CISA’s goal is to make platforms more responsive to their suggestions.

In late February, Easterly [texted](#) with Matthew Masterson, a representative at Microsoft who formerly worked at CISA, that she is “trying to get us in a place where Fed can work with platforms to better understand mis/dis trends so relevant agencies can try to prebunk/debunk as useful.”

Meeting records of the CISA Cybersecurity Advisory Committee, the main subcommittee that handles disinformation policy at CISA, show a constant effort to expand the scope of the agency’s tools to foil disinformation.

In June, the same DHS advisory committee of CISA — which includes Twitter head of legal policy, trust, and safety Vijaya Gadde and University of Washington professor Kate Starbird — drafted a [report](#) to the CISA director calling for an expansive role for the agency in shaping the “information ecosystem.” The report called on the agency to closely monitor “social media platforms of all sizes, mainstream media, cable news, hyper partisan media, talk radio and other online resources.” They argued that the agency needed to take steps to halt the “spread of false and misleading information,” with a focus on information that undermines “key democratic institutions, such as the courts, or by other sectors such as the financial system, or public health measures.”

To accomplish these broad goals, the report said, CISA should invest in external research to evaluate the “efficacy of interventions,” specifically with research looking at how alleged disinformation can be countered and how quickly messages spread. Geoff Hale, the director of the Election Security Initiative at CISA, [recommended](#) the use of third-party information-sharing nonprofits as a “clearing house for trust information to avoid the appearance of government propaganda.”

Last Thursday, immediately following billionaire Elon Musk’s completed acquisition of Twitter, Gadde was terminated from the company.

The Biden administration, however, did take a stab at making part of this infrastructure public in April 2022, with the announcement of the Disinformation Governance Board. The exact functions of the board, and how it would accomplish its goal of defining and combating MDM, were never made clear.

The board faced immediate backlash across the political spectrum. “Who among us thinks the government should add to its work list the job of determining what is true and what is disinformation? And who thinks the government is capable of telling the truth?” [wrote](#) Politico media critic Jack Shafer. “Our government produces lies and disinformation at industrial scale and always has. It overclassifies vital information to

block its own citizens from becoming any the wiser. It pays thousands of press aides to play hide the salami with facts.”

DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas alluded to broad scope of the agency’s disinformation effort when he [told](#) the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee that the role of the board — which by that point had been downgraded to a “working group” — is to “actually develop guidelines, standards, guardrails to ensure that the work that has been ongoing for nearly 10 years does not infringe on people’s free speech rights, rights of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.”

“It was quite disconcerting, frankly,” he added, “that the disinformation work that was well underway for many years across different independent administrations was not guided by guardrails.”

DHS eventually scrapped the Disinformation Governance Board in August. While free speech advocates cheered the dissolution of the board, other government efforts to root out disinformation have not only continued but expanded to encompass additional DHS sub-agencies like Customs and Border Protection, which “determines whether information about the component spread through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter is accurate.” Other agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Science and Technology Directorate (whose responsibilities include “determining whether social media accounts were bots or humans and how the mayhem caused by bots affects behavior”), and the Secret Service have also expanded their purview to include disinformation, according to the inspector general [report](#).

The draft copy of DHS’s 2022 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review reviewed by The Intercept also confirms that DHS views the issue of tackling disinformation and misinformation as a growing portion of its core duties. While “counterterrorism remains the first and most important mission of the Department,” it notes, the agency’s “work on these missions is evolving and dynamic” and must now adapt to terror threats “exacerbated by misinformation and disinformation spread online” including by “domestic violent extremists.”

To accomplish this, the draft quadrennial review calls for DHS to “leverage advanced data analytics technology and hire and train skilled specialists to better understand how threat actors use online platforms to introduce and spread toxic narratives intended to inspire or incite violence, as well as work with NGOs and other parts of civil society to build resilience to the impacts of false information.”

The broad definition of “threat actors” posing risks to vaguely defined critical infrastructure — an area as broad as trust in government, public health, elections, and financial markets — has concerned civil libertarians. “No matter your political allegiances, all of us have good reason to be concerned about government efforts to pressure private social media platforms into reaching the government’s preferred decisions about what content we can see online,” said Adam Goldstein, the vice president of research at FIRE.

“Any governmental requests to social media platforms to review or remove certain content,” he added, “should be made with extreme transparency.”

DHS’s expansion into misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation represents an important strategic retooling for the agency, which was founded in 2002 in response to the 9/11 attacks as a bulwark to coordinate intelligence and security operations across the government. At the same time, the FBI deployed thousands of agents to focus on counterterrorism efforts, through building informant networks and intelligence operations designed to prevent similar attacks.

But traditional forms of terrorism, posed by groups like Al Qaeda, evolved with the rise of social media, with groups like the Islamic State using platforms such as Facebook to recruit and radicalize new members. After initial reluctance, [social media giants](#) worked closely with the FBI and DHS to help monitor and remove ISIS-affiliated accounts.

FBI Director James Comey told the Senate Intelligence Committee that law enforcement agencies needed to rapidly “adapt and confront the challenges” posed by terror networks that had proven adept at tapping into social media. Intelligence agencies [backed new startups](#) designed to monitor the vast flow of information across social networks to better understand emerging narratives and risks.

“The Department has not been fully reauthorized since its inception over fifteen years ago,” the Senate Homeland Security Committee [warned](#) in 2018. “As the threat landscape continues to evolve, the Department adjusted its organization and activities to address emerging threats and protect the U.S. homeland. This evolution of the Department’s duties and organization, including the structure and operations of the DHS Headquarters, has never been codified in statute.”

The subsequent military defeat of ISIS forces in Syria and Iraq, along with the withdrawal from Afghanistan, left the homeland security apparatus without a target. Meanwhile, a new threat entered the discourse. The allegation that Russian agents had seeded disinformation on Facebook that tipped the 2016 election toward Donald Trump resulted in the FBI forming the Foreign Influence Task Force, a team devoted to preventing foreign meddling in American elections.

According to DHS meeting minutes from March, the FBI’s Foreign Influence Task Force this year includes 80 individuals focused on curbing “subversive data utilized to drive a wedge between the populace and the government.”

“The Department will spearhead initiatives to raise awareness of disinformation campaigns targeting communities in the United States, providing citizens the tools necessary to identify and halt the spread of information operations intended to promote radicalization to violent extremism or mobilization to violence,” DHS Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan said in a September 2019 [strategic framework](#).

DHS also began to broaden its watch to include a wide array of domestic actors viewed as potential sources of radicalization and upheaval. An FBI official interviewed by The Intercept described how, in the summer of 2020, amid the George Floyd protests, he was reassigned from his normal job of countering foreign intelligence services to monitoring American social media accounts. (The official, not authorized to speak publicly, described the reassignment on condition of anonymity.)

And a June 2020 memo bearing the subject line “Actions to Address the Threat Posed by Domestic Terrorists and Other Domestic Extremists” prepared by DHS headquarters for Wolf, Trump’s acting DHS secretary, delineates plans to “expand information sharing with the tech sector” in order to “identify disinformation campaigns used by DT [domestic terrorism] actors to incite violence against infrastructure, ethnic, racial or religious groups, or individuals.” The memo outlines plans to work with private tech sector partners to share unclassified DHS intelligence on “DT actors and their tactics” so that platforms can “move effectively use their own tools to enforce user agreements/terms of service and remove DT content.”

Biden also prioritized such efforts. Last year, the Biden administration [released](#) the first National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism. The strategy identified a “broader priority: enhancing faith in government and addressing the extreme polarization, fueled by a crisis of disinformation and misinformation often channeled through social media platforms, which can tear Americans apart and lead some to violence.”

“We are working with like-minded governments, civil society, and the technology sector to address terrorist and violent extremist content online, including through innovative research collaborations,” the strategy document continued, adding that the administration was “addressing the crisis of disinformation and misinformation, often channeled through social and other media platforms, that can fuel extreme polarization and lead some individuals to violence.”

Last year, a top FBI counterterrorism official came [under fire](#) when she falsely denied to Congress that the FBI monitors Americans’ social media and had therefore missed threats leading up to the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. In fact, the FBI has [spent millions of dollars](#) on social media tracking

software like [Babel X](#) and [Dataminr](#). According to the bureau's [official guidelines](#), authorized activities include "proactively surfing the Internet to find publicly accessible websites and services through which recruitment by terrorist organizations and promotion of terrorist crimes is openly taking place."

Another FBI official, a joint terrorism task force officer, described to The Intercept being reassigned this year from the bureau's international terrorism division, where they had primarily worked on cases involving Al Qaeda and the Islamic State group, to the domestic terrorism division to investigate Americans, including anti-government individuals such as racially motivated violent extremists, sovereign citizens, militias, and anarchists. They work on an undercover basis online to penetrate social networking chat rooms, online forums, and blogs to detect, enter, dismantle, and disrupt existing and emerging terrorist organizations via online forums, chat rooms, bulletin boards, blogs, websites, and social networking, said the FBI official, who did not have permission to speak on the record.

The Privacy Act of 1974, enacted following the Watergate scandal, restricts government data collection of Americans exercising their First Amendment rights, a safeguard that civil liberty groups have [argued limits](#) the ability of DHS and the FBI to engage in surveillance of American political speech expressed on social media. The statute, however, maintains exemptions for information collected for the purposes of a criminal or law enforcement investigation.

"There are no specific legal constraints on the FBI's use of social media," Faiza Patel, senior director of the Brennan Center for Justice's liberty and national security program told The Intercept. "The attorney general guidelines permit agents to look at social media before there is any investigation at all. So it's kind of a Wild West out there."

The first FBI official, whom The Intercept interviewed in 2020 amid the George Floyd riots, lamented the drift toward warrantless monitoring of Americans saying, "Man, I don't even know what's legal anymore."

In retrospect, the New York Post reporting on the contents of Hunter Biden's laptop ahead of the 2020 election provides an elucidating case study of how this works in an increasingly partisan environment.

Much of the public ignored the reporting or assumed it was false, as over 50 former intelligence officials [charged](#) that the laptop story was a creation of a "Russian disinformation" campaign. The mainstream media was primed by allegations of election interference in 2016 — and, to be sure, Trump did attempt to use the laptop to disrupt the Biden campaign. Twitter ended up banning links to the New York Post's report on the contents of the laptop during the crucial weeks leading up to the election. Facebook also throttled users' ability to view the story.

In recent months, a clearer picture of the government's influence has emerged.

In an appearance on Joe Rogan's podcast in August, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg revealed that Facebook had limited sharing of the New York Post's reporting after a conversation with the FBI. "The background here is that the FBI came to us — some folks on our team — and was like, 'Hey, just so you know, you should be on high alert that there was a lot of Russian propaganda in the 2016 election,'" Zuckerberg told Rogan. The FBI told them, Zuckerberg said, that "'We have it on notice that basically there's about to be some kind of dump.'" When the Post's story came out in October 2020, Facebook thought it "fit that pattern" the FBI had told them to look out for.

Zuckerberg said he regretted the decision, as did Jack Dorsey, the CEO of Twitter at the time. Despite claims that the laptop's contents were forged, the Washington Post [confirmed](#) that at least some of the emails on the laptop were authentic. The New York Times [authenticated emails](#) from the laptop — many of which were cited in the original New York Post reporting from October 2020 — that prosecutors have examined as part of the Justice Department's probe into whether the president's son violated the law on a range of issues, including money laundering, tax-related offenses, and foreign lobbying registration.

Documents [filed](#) in federal court as part of a lawsuit by the attorneys general of Missouri and Louisiana add a layer of new detail to Zuckerberg's anecdote, revealing that officials leading the push to expand the government's reach into disinformation also played a quiet role in shaping the decisions of social media giants around the New York Post story.

According to records filed in federal court, two previously unnamed FBI agents — Elvis Chan, an FBI special agent in the San Francisco field office, and Dehmlow, the section chief of the FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force — were involved in high-level communications that allegedly “led to Facebook's suppression” of the Post's reporting.

The Hunter Biden laptop story was only the most high-profile example of law enforcement agencies pressuring technology firms. In many cases, the Facebook and Twitter accounts flagged by DHS or its partners as dangerous forms of disinformation or potential foreign influence were clearly parody accounts or accounts with virtually no followers or influence.

In May, Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt took the lead in filing a lawsuit to combat what he views as sweeping efforts by the Biden administration to pressure social media companies to moderate certain forms of content appearing on their platforms.

The suit alleges governmentwide efforts to censor certain stories, especially ones related to the pandemic. It also names multiple agencies across the government that have participated in efforts to monitor speech and “open collusion” between the administration and social media companies. It identifies, for example, [emails between](#) officials from the National Institutes of Health, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, and Zuckerberg at the beginning of the pandemic, and reveals ongoing discussions between senior Biden administration officials with Meta executives on developing content moderation policies on a range of issues, including issues related to elections and vaccines.

Attorneys for the Biden administration have responded in court by claiming that the plaintiffs lack standing and that social media firms pursued content moderation policies on their own volition, without any “[coercive](#)” influence from the government. On October 21, the judge presiding over the case granted the attorneys general permission to depose Fauci, CISA officials, and communication specialists from the White House.

While the lawsuit has a definite partisan slant, pointing the finger at the Biden administration for allegedly seeking to control private speech, many of the subpoenas request information that spans into the Trump era and provides a window into the absurdity of the ongoing effort.

“There is growing evidence that the legislative and executive branch officials are using social media companies to engage in censorship by surrogate,” said Jonathan Turley, a professor of law at George Washington University, who has written about the lawsuit. “It is axiomatic that the government cannot do indirectly what it is prohibited from doing directly. If government officials are directing or facilitating such censorship, it raises serious First Amendment questions.”

During the 2020 election, the Department of Homeland Security, in an email to an official at Twitter, forwarded information about a potential threat to critical U.S. infrastructure, citing FBI warnings, in this case about an account that could imperil election system integrity.

The Twitter user in question had 56 followers, along with a bio that read “dm us your weed store locations (hoses be mad, but this is a parody account),” under a banner image of Blucifer, the 32-foot-tall demonic horse sculpture featured at the entrance of the Denver International Airport.

“We are not sure if there's any action that can be taken, but we wanted to flag them for consideration,” wrote a state official on the email thread, forwarding on other examples of accounts that could be confused with official government entities. The Twitter representative responded: “We will escalate. Thank you.” Each email in the chain carried a disclaimer that the agency “neither has nor seeks the ability to remove or edit what information is made available on social media platforms.”

	<p>That tagline, however, concerns free speech advocates, who note that the agency is attempting to make an end run around the First Amendment by exerting continual pressure on private sector social media firms. “When the government suggests things, it’s not too hard to pull off the velvet glove, and you get the mail fist,” said Adam Candeub, a professor of law at Michigan State University. “And I would consider such actions, especially when it’s bureaucratized, as essentially state action and government collusion with the platforms.”</p> <p>“If a foreign authoritarian government sent these messages,” noted Nadine Strossen, the former president of the American Civil Liberties Union, “there is no doubt we would call it censorship.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Destructive ‘Azov ransomware’ data wiper
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-azov-data-wiper-tries-to-frame-researchers-and-bleepingcomputer/
GIST	<p>A new and destructive 'Azov Ransomware' data wiper is being heavily distributed through pirated software, key generators, and adware bundles, trying to frame well-known security researchers by claiming they are behind the attack.</p> <p>The Azov Ransomware falsely claims to have been created by a well-known security researcher named Hasherazade and lists other researchers, myself, and BleepingComputer, as involved in the operation.</p> <p>The ransom note, named RESTORE_FILES.txt, says that devices are encrypted in protest of the seizure of Crimea and because Western countries are not doing enough to help Ukraine in their war against Russia.</p> <p>The ransom note tells victims to contact me, BleepingComputer, MalwareHunterTeam, Michael Gillespie, or Vitali Kremez on Twitter to recover files, falsely implying that we are part of the ransomware operation.</p> <p>To be clear, those listed in the ransom note are not associated with this ransomware and are being framed by the threat actor. Therefore, we, unfortunately, do not have the decryption keys and cannot help.</p> <p>Furthermore, as there is no way to contact the threat actors to pay a ransom, this malware should be treated as a destructive data wiper rather than ransomware.</p> <p>Unfortunately, victims have already started contacting BleepingComputer for help recovering files, and as much as we would like to help, there is no known way of helping at this time.</p> <p>While the threat actors claim they are doing this in support of Ukraine, BleepingComputer knows of a Ukrainian organization affected by this data wiper.</p> <p>The wiper takes its name from the Ukrainian Azov Regiment, a controversial military force that allegedly associated with neo-Nazi ideology in the past.</p> <p>This is not the first time threat actors attempted to frame security researchers for their malware.</p> <p>In 2016, the Apocalypse ransomware operation renamed one of its variants to Fabiansomware after Fabian Wosar. In 2020, one of the Maze ransomware developers released an MBR Locker, claiming it was made by Vital Kremez.</p> <p>What we know about the Azov wiper</p> <p>In a new campaign started over the past two days, a threat actor appears to have purchased 'installs' through the SmokeLoader malware botnet to deliver the new destructive Azov wiper.</p>

SmokeLoader is a malware botnet that other threat actors can rent or buy 'installs,' to distribute their own malware on infected devices. SmokeLoader is commonly distributed through websites pushing fake software cracks, game modifications, cheats, and key generators.

Over the past few days, SmokeLoader has begun delivering the new 'Azov Ransomware,' along with other malware [[VirusTotal](#)], such as the RedLine Stealer information-stealing malware and the STOP ransomware.

BleepingComputer is aware of victims being double-encrypted, first with Azov and then with STOP ransomware, as SmokeLoader delivered both simultaneously.

While the ransomware will be analyzed by researchers for weaknesses in the encryption, at this time, the ransomware should be considered destructive, as there is no way to contact the threat actors and recover decryption keys.

We will update this article if a method is discovered to recover files for free.

However, if this data wiper encrypted your data, you were likely also infected with other malware, such as information-stealing trojans.

Therefore, you should immediately change the passwords on your online accounts, especially those sensitive in nature, such as online banking, password managers, and email accounts.

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HEADLINE	10/30 Former UK PM phone hacked?
SOURCE	https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-63442813?web_view=true
GIST	<p>The government has been urged to open an investigation into claims former prime minister Liz Truss's phone was hacked while she was foreign secretary.</p> <p>The Mail on Sunday reported private messages between Ms Truss and foreign officials, including about the Ukraine war, fell into foreign hands.</p> <p>The hack was discovered during the summer Tory leadership campaign but the news was suppressed, the paper said.</p> <p>The government said it had "robust" cyber-threat protection in place.</p> <p>The spokesperson added that the government "did not comment on individuals' security arrangements".</p> <p>Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove told Sky News he did not know the full details "of what security breach, if any, took place" but said the government took these issues "incredibly seriously".</p> <p>Details about the hack were suppressed by then-prime minister Boris Johnson and Cabinet Secretary Simon Case, The Mail on Sunday claimed, citing what it said amounted to a "news blackout" imposed by Mr Case.</p> <p>The newspaper also said private messages exchanged between Ms Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng, her close friend whom she made chancellor when she became prime minister, were also uncovered by the alleged hack.</p> <p>It is not clear how any hack happened, but opposition parties have seized on the issue.</p> <p>"There are immensely important national security issues raised by an attack like this by a hostile state which will have been taken extremely seriously by our intelligence and security agencies," said shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper.</p>

	<p>"There are also serious security questions around why and how this information has been leaked or released right now which must also be urgently investigated."</p> <p>The Mail on Sunday reported agents suspected of working for Russia had been responsible for the alleged hacking, citing unnamed sources, but the BBC has not been able to verify this.</p> <p>The Liberal Democrats foreign affairs spokesperson Layla Moran MP raised concerns about why the alleged hack had not been made public earlier.</p> <p>"We need an urgent independent investigation to uncover the truth," Ms Moran said. "If it turns out this information was withheld from the public to protect Liz Truss's leadership bid, that would be unforgivable."</p> <p>The government has refused to comment on any of the details reported by the Mail on Sunday.</p> <p>"The government has robust systems in place to protect against cyber threats," a spokesman said. "That includes regular security briefings for ministers, and advice on protecting their personal data and mitigating cyber threats."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Pro-China group political power play in US
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/30/china-launches-aggressive-political-power-play-und/
GIST	<p>Cybersecurity firm Mandiant said Wednesday that a pro-China cyber group waged an aggressive influence campaign online that discouraged Americans from voting in the midterm elections and promoted clashes with the U.S government.</p> <p>Mandiant said it previously saw the "DRAGONBRIDGE" threat group trying to mobilize protesters in the U.S. and has now witnessed the group sowing division, plagiarizing and altering news articles, and adopting false personas on social media to spread disinformation.</p> <p>"Most notably, in September 2022, DRAGONBRIDGE accounts posted an English-language video across multiple social media platforms containing content attempting to discourage Americans from voting in the upcoming U.S. midterm elections," Mandiant said in a new report. "The video questioned the efficacy of voting and of U.S. government institutions more broadly."</p> <p>Mandiant said the video argued the solution was not to vote but to "root out this ineffective and incapacitated system" over an image of the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol.</p> <p>"The campaign also pointed to frequent mentions of 'civil war' on social media and incidents of politically motivated violence, including confrontations between individuals supporting opposing parties and acts against the FBI, as evidence of the deterioration of the political process and its impending demise," the report said.</p> <p>Alongside lambasting American democracy, the group also sought to manipulate news reports and cyber research to make it appear as though Chinese hackers were actually doing America's bidding.</p> <p>The group claimed the APT41 hacking group was developed by the U.S. government in posts on Twitter, according to Mandiant. The FBI has identified APT41 as Chinese hackers that also use the name Barium.</p> <p>Mandiant has described APT41 as a group that combines state-sponsored cyberespionage with financially motivated cybercrime targeting a variety of sectors such as health care and media.</p> <p>The DRAGONBRIDGE effort plagiarized a Radio Free Asia news article and altered it to describe the cyberattackers as a "U.S. hacking group," according to Mandiant.</p>

“Accounts plagiarized, altered, and otherwise mischaracterized news reporting and research from Mandiant and other cybersecurity organizations to support their allegations,” Mandiant’s report said. “Such narratives appear to be a continuation of themes alleging malicious U.S. cyber activity that we have seen DRAGONBRIDGE promote since at least April 2022.”

The DRAGONBRIDGE effort also used accounts impersonating Intrusion Truth, a group known for exposing Chinese hackers online.

Mandiant vice president of intelligence analysis John Hultquist said in a statement that the DRAGONBRIDGE effort did not appear fully successful but he was troubled by their aggressive growth.

The pro-China effort to influence Americans’ behavior comes amid new concerns of hackers from China targeting political parties.

The coming midterm elections are not the first time China has sought to exert influence. The National Counterintelligence and Security Center issued a statement in August 2020 before the last presidential election saying China sought to “pressure political figures” that it determined were opposed to its interests and wanted to counter criticism of China.

Ahead of the 2022 midterms, the Biden administration has worked to squelch concerns that cyberattackers can successfully disrupt election infrastructure. The FBI and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency published an assessment earlier this month that said cyberattacks are “unlikely to disrupt or prevent voting.”

“As of the date of this report, the FBI and CISA have no reporting to suggest cyber activity has ever prevented a registered voter from casting a ballot, compromised the integrity of any ballots cast, or affected the accuracy of voter registration information,” the agencies said earlier this month.

FBI and CISA did not immediately provide comment for this story.

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HEADLINE	10/29 Hate cleric Choudary returns to Twitter
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11369737/Hate-cleric-Anjem-Choudary-returns-Twitter-praising-Elon-Musks-free-speech-rule.html
GIST	<p>Islamic hate preacher Anjem Choudary is back on Twitter and has praised its new owner Elon Musk for giving him the opportunity to reach a global audience.</p> <p>Choudary, 55, was jailed in 2016 for five-and-a-half years for inviting support for ISIS.</p> <p>The former lawyer was released from jail on licence having served half of his sentence but was subjected to stringent conditions, including a ban from preaching in person or online.</p> <p>He was banned permanently from Twitter less than a week after he rejoined the social network in 2019. But now he believes he can resume his career.</p> <p>Speaking to MailOnline, Choudary said he will continue preaching online.</p> <p>When asked if he will be banned again, he replied: 'Who knows... if what Elon says about free speech holds true then it should stay up.'</p> <p>The Twitter account has several links to sermons as well as an upcoming online debate being hosted on Telegram.</p> <p>In a series of tweets posted over the past 24 hours, Choudary criticises the PM Rishi Sunak and condemns the up-coming FIFA World Cup in Qatar.</p>

He also calls on King Charles III to convert to Islam.

Before it was banned, Choudary was a leading member of al-Muhajiroun which was accused of radicalising youths.

Before being jailed, he helped to radicalise Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale, the killers of Fusilier Lee Rigby in South-East London in 2013; and Khuram Butt, the ringleader of the London Bridge attacks of 2017.

Dozens of Choudary's followers joined ISIS in Syria, including Siddhartha Dhar, also known as Jihadi Sid, who featured in a video showing him executing a victim.

Mohammed Reza Haque, Choudary's former bodyguard who became known as Jihadi Giant due to his 6ft 6in frame, beheaded a hostage in another propaganda recording.

Choudary, a father-of-five, is understood to have written an autobiography, although is unlikely to make any money from it because he is banned from having a bank account.

Before he was arrested, convicted and locked up, Choudary had become, according to one ex-police chief, the 'de facto spokesperson for Islamism in the UK'.

Once a leading figure in the now-banned group al-Muhajiroun, he voiced controversial views on Sharia law, while building up a following of thousands through social media, demonstrations and lectures around the world.

Choudary was regularly seen in the media, giving numerous television and newspaper interviews up until his arrest in the autumn of 2014.

But he largely managed to avoid falling foul of the law until he was convicted of inviting support for ISIS.

Choudary was born in north London and studied medicine for a year before he became 'disenchanted' and switched to law.

The married father-of-five told jurors at his Old Bailey trial he qualified as a solicitor and opened his own practice.

As he became more religious, practising elements of law troubled him and he decided there was 'a better path'.

In the 1990s, Choudary became a student of the cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed, learning about Sharia Law and the 'science of the Koran'.

Choudary was a prolific writer and told his trial that he had joined Twitter two or three years earlier, amassing more than 32,000 followers.

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HEADLINE	10/28 Thomson Reuters reveals exposed server
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/thomson-reuters-notifies-customers-of-exposed-server-with-unprotected-business-data/
GIST	<p>Thomson Reuters said it has notified a “small subset of customers” of a misconfigured server after researchers discovered 3 TB of data in an exposed cloud database.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the company told The Record the issue involved an ElasticSearch server used with their ONESOURCE Global Trade product — a tool the media conglomerate markets to Fortune 500</p>

businesses as a global trade compliance platform. Businesses use the product to get information about regulatory rules in different countries and other information about the supply chain ecosystem around the world.

According to the spokesperson, the server contained logs of customers' searches on the platform.

"We have proactively notified the small subset of customers who may have had data logged on that server. We have also addressed and mitigated the misconfiguration," they said. "The majority of the customers are based in the USA."

Thomson Reuters confirmed that it was alerted to the misconfigured servers by Cybernews, a cybersecurity research organization, which found they had been left accessible since October 21. The company published a report saying their researchers found three databases accessible to anyone, one of which had "a trove of sensitive, up-to-date information from across the company's platforms."

Both Thomson Reuters and Cybernews said the issue was quickly addressed after it was discovered.

Cybernews said evidence from the server showed that the open instance "was used as a logging server to collect vast amounts of data gathered through user-client interaction," with some data samples logged as recently as October 26.

"In other words, the company collected and exposed thousands of gigabytes of data that Cybernews researchers believe would be worth millions of dollars on underground criminal forums because of the potential access it could give to other systems," the researchers said. Among the cache were "credentials to third-party servers."

"The details were held in plaintext format, visible to anyone crawling through the open instance... This type of information would allow threat actors to gain an initial foothold in the systems used by companies working with Thomson Reuters," they wrote.

The Thomson Reuters spokesperson said an investigation was launched as soon as Cybernews notified them of the issue.

"We appreciate the work of the ethical security researchers who brought this matter to our attention," they said.

Laminar CEO Amit Shaked explained that unsecured Elasticsearch databases are extremely common and can affect nearly any company – leading to potential exposure of important information.

Because cloud hosting solutions often fall on the outskirts of data and security teams' visibility range, Shaked said the incident is another reminder for security teams to make sure they know where sensitive data is held, especially in cloud-based environments.

Jerrold Piker, competitive intelligence analyst at cybersecurity firm Deep Instinct, added that the exposure of third-party credentials in plaintext was a concerning aspect of the leak, creating risk for Thomson Reuters and its customers.

"Because of the inherent trust that business partners place in each other, this is a very alarming discovery to say the least," Piker said.

Dan Vasile, former vice president of information security at Paramount, tied the incident with Thomson Reuters to the cyberattacks faced by other news outlets like The New York Post and Fast Company, noting that media companies are typically targeted for the vast amount of data they have access to.

"Generally speaking, large media organizations have structured cyber security programs in place. However, the sector has been evolving over the years, expanding content production and distribution by

both traditional and new means, adopting new technologies, and that has created a more distributed and fragmented third-party ecosystem,” said Vasile, who now is now a vice president at cybersecurity firm BlueVoyant.

“In addition, as companies’ internal networks become more well-defended, often a member of their digital supply chain, like a vendor or supplier, is the weak link. Our own recent research on the media industry found security weaknesses and vulnerabilities across a number of vendors that support the media industry, suggesting that, as an industry, media faces significant cybersecurity challenges.”

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HEADLINE	10/28 Latvia cyberspace faces new challenges
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/latvias-cyberspace-faces-new-challenges-amid-war-in-ukraine/
GIST	<p>Russian cyberattacks may be a global threat, but Ukraine’s allies have been especially at risk. Among them is Latvia, which was one of the first to declare Russia a “state sponsor of terrorism” and stopped issuing entry visas to Russian citizens in August.</p> <p>Before Russia invaded Ukraine in late February, most cyberattacks targeting Latvian organizations were financially motivated, but now the country’s cybersecurity agencies have to deal with more serious threats — pro-Russian hackers and nation-state hackers targeting the government, critical infrastructure, and private businesses.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the number of cyberattacks in Latvia has increased by more than 30%, Varis Teivans, the deputy manager of Latvia’s Computer Emergency Readiness Team (CERT), told The Record.</p> <p>What hackers are actually achieving, however, is less clear. Cyberattacks by pro-Kremlin hacktivist groups like Killnet usually achieve nothing more than publicity, although Teivans does admit the activity of state-backed hackers is “a cause for concern.”</p> <p>The Record visited Teivans at CERT’s office in the Latvian capital of Riga this month to talk about the new challenges Russia’s war with Ukraine poses for Baltic cyberspace.</p> <p>Hacktivism vs APT groups</p> <p>The cyberattacks that attract the most media attention in Latvia are usually carried out by pro-Kremlin hackers, including Killnet and its affiliates (like XakNet and FuckNet), according to Teivans.</p> <p>They usually conduct distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, flooding websites with junk traffic to knock them offline, or post threatening messages on the main page of the websites, in what’s known as defacement attacks.</p> <p>Most of these are successfully countered by Latvian cybersecurity specialists, and those that hit the targets have no lasting impact, according to Teivans.</p> <p>For example, Killnet launched a DDoS attack on the website of the Latvian parliament in early August. They took the site down for several hours but it ultimately didn’t disturb the work of policymakers.</p> <p>Hackers often attack in response to specific events, according to Teivans — Latvia designated Russia a “state sponsor of terrorism” shortly before the DDoS attack on the parliament website.</p> <p>In July, pro-Kremlin hackers attacked Latvian computer systems almost daily, outraged by the Latvian government’s decision to demolish nearly 300 Soviet monuments.</p> <p>“What they’ve achieved was to disrupt some of the public transport ticketing services,” and a charity that collects donations for people in need, Teivans said. “This is a very bad performance.”</p>

According to Teivans, Russian hacktivists have a “poor understanding” of what they are targeting. Once, they attacked the website of a now-closed Latvian airport, and mistakenly hacked the Latvian agency responsible for parks and recreation, confusing it with the Ministry of the Interior.

“Russian hacktivists are a PR project, not talented hackers,” Teivans said. “Every time they claim to have hacked some of our websites and leaked information, it’s a lie, sometimes a very pathetic one.”

FuckNet, for example, once claimed to have hacked the website of President Egils Levits and stolen data, which, it turned out, was publicly-available procurement information.

There are, however, more sophisticated cyber operations conducted by capable Russian hackers — the so-called advanced persistent threat (APT) groups. “These are the attacks we are most concerned about,” Teivans said.

Threats to critical infrastructure

Among APT’s most common targets are state services, critical infrastructure facilities, and businesses that work with the government. “Private businesses are compromised to gain access to more secure government networks,” Teivans said.

The same hacker groups that have targeted Ukraine have tried to compromise Latvia’s telecommunication and energy infrastructure, Teivans added, though he said he couldn’t disclose the names of the groups or the impact these attacks had due to security reasons.

In September, the Ukrainian government warned that Russia plans to increase the intensity of DDoS attacks on the critical infrastructure of Ukraine’s closest allies, including the Baltic countries.

Carefully-planned cyberattacks on the right targets could increase the effect of missile strikes on electrical supply facilities, according to Ukrainian intelligence.

Teivans agreed that Russian hackers could intensify their attacks on Europe’s energy sector and some critical infrastructure. In fact, they may have been preparing for these attacks for months.

“APT operations are not opportunistic,” Teivans said. “Nation-state hackers usually ‘sit’ in critical networks for a while, waiting for a perfect moment to attack.”

Countering old threats

Latvia was a common target for Russian hackers even before the start of the war in Ukraine, said Teivans, who has worked at CERT since its inception in 2007.

For example, Russian hackers repeatedly [targeted](#) Latvia during and after the October 2018 parliamentary elections. These attacks didn’t alter the election results but created distrust between Moscow and Riga.

Prior to those elections, pro-Russia hackers [replaced](#) the front page of the Facebook-like Latvian social media site Draugiem with a Russian flag and a message saying “Fellow Latvians, this concerns you. The Russian border has no limits!”

With the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Estonia and Lithuania were also increasingly attacked by Russian hackers.

Like its Baltic neighbors, Latvia was formerly part of the Soviet Union and still has a large Russian-speaking minority.

But its government actively supported Ukraine in the war against Russia, sending weapons, sheltering Ukrainian refugees and supporting sanctions against the Kremlin. Since extending that support, the number of cyberattacks on Latvia has increased significantly.

	<p>To counter these threats, the country has two CERTs — one responsible for Latvia’s cyberspace with a focus on government computer systems and critical infrastructure, and the other for the protection of military networks.</p> <p>Both of them are subordinate to Latvia’s Ministry of Defense, which Teivans says is a big advantage. “The MOD is committed to cybersecurity and heavily supports it legislatively and with funding,” he said.</p> <p>Although Latvia is preparing for Russian attacks, Teivans doesn’t think that they will be struck in the same way as Ukrainian targets.</p> <p>“We are still at a stage where kinetic warfare is a priority for the attacking nation, while cyber is only a tool for threat actors to gain some economic and political advantage or a means to support kinetic operations,” he told The Record.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Europe to rewrite rules of the internet
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2022/10/europe-prepares-to-rewrite-the-rules-of-the-internet/
GIST	<p>Next week, a law takes effect that will change the Internet forever—and make it much more difficult to be a tech giant. On November 1, the European Union’s Digital Markets Act comes into force, starting the clock on a process expected to force Amazon, Google, and Meta to make their platforms more open and interoperable in 2023. That could bring major changes to what people can do with their devices and apps, in a new reminder that Europe has regulated tech companies much more actively than the US.</p> <p>“We expect the consequences to be significant,” says Gerard de Graaf, a veteran EU official who helped pass the DMA early this year. Last month, he became director of a new EU office in San Francisco, established in part to explain the law’s consequences to Big Tech companies. De Graaf says they will be forced to break open their walled gardens.</p> <p>“If you have an iPhone, you should be able to download apps not just from the App Store but from other app stores or from the Internet,” de Graaf says in a conference room with emerald-green accents at the Irish consulate in San Francisco, where the EU’s office is initially located. The DMA requires dominant platforms to let in smaller competitors and could also compel Meta’s WhatsApp to receive messages from competing apps like Signal or Telegram, or prevent Amazon, Apple, and Google from preferencing their own apps and services.</p> <p>Although the DMA takes force next week, tech platforms don’t have to comply immediately. The EU first must decide which companies are large and entrenched enough to be classified as “gatekeepers” subject to the toughest rules. De Graaf expects that about a dozen companies will be in that group, to be announced in the spring. Those gatekeepers will then have six months to come into compliance.</p> <p>De Graaf has predicted a wave of lawsuits challenging Europe’s new rules for Big Tech but says he is in California to help make clear to Silicon Valley giants that the rules have changed. The EU has previously levied big fines against Google, Apple, and others through antitrust investigations, a mechanism that put the burden of proof on bureaucrats, he says. Under DMA, the onus is on the business to fall in line. “The key message is that negotiations are over, we’re in a compliance situation,” de Graaf says. “You may not like it, but that’s the way it is.”</p> <p>Like the EU’s digital privacy law, GDPR, the DMA is expected to lead to changes in how tech platforms serve people beyond the EU’s 400 million Internet users, because some details of compliance will be more easily implemented globally.</p> <p>Tech companies will also soon have to grapple with a second sweeping EU law, the Digital Services Act, which requires risk assessments of some algorithms and disclosures about automated decision-making and could force social apps like TikTok to open their data to outside scrutiny. The law is also to be implemented in stages, with the largest online platforms expected to have to comply in mid-2024. The EU</p>

is also [considering passing specific rules for artificial intelligence](#), which could ban some use cases of the technology.

De Graaf argues that tougher rules for tech giants are needed not only to help protect people and other businesses from unfair practices, but to allow society to receive the full benefits of technology. He has been critical of a nonbinding [AI Bill of Rights recently released by the White House](#), saying that a lack of firm regulation can undermine the public's confidence in technology. "If our citizens lose trust in AI because they believe it discriminates against them and leads to outcomes that are harmful to their lives," he says, "they are going to shun AI, and it will never be successful."

The EU's new office opened after recent moves by the bloc and the US to collaborate more on tech policy. De Graaf says both sides are interested in finding ways to address chip shortages and the ways authoritarian governments can leverage technology and the Internet.

He's also planning a trip to Sacramento to meet California state lawmakers who he says have been trailblazers in standing up to Big Tech. They [passed a bill last month](#) requiring strict default privacy settings for children and controls on how companies use data they collect about kids. The US Congress has passed relatively little legislation affecting the tech industry in recent years, aside from the [\\$52 billion CHIPS and Science Act in support of semiconductor production in July](#).

Marlena Wisniak, who leads work on tech at civil liberties group the European Center for Not for Profit Law, takes the EU's new presence in the tech industry's backyard as new proof it is serious about shaping tech policy globally. She says de Graaf should use some of that power to benefit people reliant on Big Tech platforms outside the US and EU, who are rarely represented in tech diplomacy.

Wisniak also hopes the EU's digital emissaries can avoid falling into traps that have derailed the plans of some previous newcomers to Silicon Valley, a place with many more executives, entrepreneurs, and investors than policy experts. "I hope that EU policymakers don't get dazzled by the tech hype," she says. "The tech bro narrative is real."

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HEADLINE	10/28 News media companies weak cybersecurity
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/insider-threat/incidents-expose-weak-cybersecurity-programs-at-news-media-organizations
GIST	<p>Two cyber incidents involving news media companies underscored the need for these businesses to take a closer look at their security operations.</p> <p>In the past two days it was reported that the website and Twitter account of the N.Y. Post was hacked by an insider, whom the paper subsequently fired. And Thomson Reuters reportedly left a least three of its databases open on the public internet. One of the open instances was 3 terabytes of a public-facing Elasticsearch database that contained sensitive data across the company's platforms.</p> <p>SC Media reached out to security experts and asked them to offer some insights as to why media companies face constant attacks and if they have the necessary security tools to meet the growing threat landscape.</p> <p>Media companies have been and will continue to be targeted by cyberattacks for at least two important reasons, said Jerrod Piker, competitive intelligence analyst at Deep Instinct. First, as we saw with both the Sony and Thomson Reuters hacks, media companies are often behind the eight ball when it comes to completely protecting their computing environments from the inside-out, making them relatively easy targets to penetrate. Second, Piker said the intellectual property that media companies produce is very valuable, from not-yet-released blockbuster movies to sensitive news stories.</p> <p>"If we are to see a marked improvement in the number of attacks on media companies, it's going to take a concerted effort by the cybersecurity community and willing technical teams from the largest media</p>

organizations to identify common security gaps and introduce necessary policies and tools to close them,” Piker said. “It could also prove helpful if more specific security guidelines were created and enforced by an external collective, similar to what we see with the Payment Card Industry’s Data Security Standards compliance framework.”

Amit Shaked, co-founder and CEO at Laminar, explained that media companies are appealing targets because they can reach a large number of people in a short time. They also keep contact information for a slew of credible and potentially valuable sources, scoops on stories that haven't yet broken, and, whether all of the details make it into articles or not, massive amounts of notes/recordings from interviews with their story subjects — which could include geopolitical actors, said Shaked.

“If their systems or even social media accounts were infiltrated, cybercriminals or [hacktivists](#) could spread misinformation, or if any of this data ended up in a cybercriminal's hands, they'd have significant leverage for monetary extortion of the company,” Shaked said. “In all cases, it’s critical for news organizations to know where all data resides, who is accessing the data and/or their systems, and what their security posture is, to prevent hacks, leakage and extortion.”

Shaked added that news organizations have traditionally had smaller budgets than major corporations in other verticals, making it more challenging to obtain funds for cybersecurity tools and teams. Shaked said with all of the sensitive information they house and the number of people they can reach, it will become increasingly important to fight for the investment.

Tech environments less hardened and may be more prone to insider risk

Mike Parkin, senior technical engineer at Vulcan Cyber, pointed out that media companies operate in a much different environment than do financial services or healthcare. Parkin said they operate at a fast pace and don't have the same kinds of regulatory oversight found in other industries. While many of them do invest in solid security controls, it's often not as high a priority as it is for a bank or hospital, said Parkin.

“This can lead to an environment that's not as hardened as other potential targets, and employees who don't get the same level of security training, or take it as seriously, as can be found in other industries,” Parkin said. “Media companies may not have the same kinds of personal data that threat actors can be interested in, they are still inviting targets. And it's hard to overestimate the potential damage that can occur if a malicious actor took control of a widely respected media outlet.”

John Bambenek, principal threat hunter at Netenrich, said attacks against media companies, particularly social media accounts, have been ripe targets for a long time. Compromises are highly public, and thus embarrassing, which makes them appealing for disgruntled insiders or hacktivists looking for attention.

“Typically, they don’t view themselves as needing high security, except when national security reporting or politically sensitive reporting are involved, so they may not adopt as strong of controls as they could,” noted Bambenek.

Deep Instinct’s Piker said media companies are generally so focused on preventing unauthorized access, they could miss an insider threat. Piker pointed to the [Sony Pictures](#) hack in 2014 where attackers collected more than 100 TBs of data without being detected, and one individual who claimed to have been involved in the attack as a member of the Guardians of Peace said they had access for at least a year prior to the attack.

“While Sony Pictures undoubtedly had best-of-breed perimeter security in place to prevent unauthorized access, they didn’t account for a trusted account being used to steal the data,” Piker said. “Further analysis of the attack also revealed that the threat actors had used a listening implant, backdoor, proxy tool, and wiper malware to collect information and then erase evidence of the attack. It’s important that media companies take appropriate measures to not only prevent unauthorized access at the network level, but also to monitor for suspicious system and user behavior at every level of access to avoid this type of catastrophic damage.”

HEADLINE	10/28 Twilio: separate smishing, vishing attacks
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/twilio-says-employees-targeted-separate-smishing-vishing-attacks
GIST	<p>Enterprise communications firm Twilio has concluded its investigation into the recent data breach and revealed on Thursday that its employees were targeted in smishing and vishing attacks on two separate occasions.</p> <p>On August 7, Twilio revealed that it had detected unauthorized access to information related to customer accounts a few days earlier. A probe revealed that the breach was a result of an SMS phishing (smishing) attack targeting the company's employees.</p> <p>At around the same time, Cloudflare said it had also been targeted and a few weeks later it came to light that the companies were targeted as part of a massive phishing campaign that hit over 130 organizations. The attackers appeared to be financially motivated.</p> <p>Twilio has now concluded its investigation. The company says the attackers were locked out of its systems on August 9 and that only 209 of its more than 270,000 customers were impacted, as well as 93 of 75 million Authy end user accounts. There is no evidence that the threat actors accessed Twilio customer console account credentials, authentication tokens or API keys.</p> <p>Twilio's final report reveals that the same threat actor was likely also responsible for an attack that targeted the company in late June. The firm described it as a "brief security incident" that involved voice phishing (vishing). The attackers used social engineering to trick an employee into handing over their credentials, which they used to access the contact information of a limited number of customers.</p> <p>Twilio claims the hackers' access was identified and shut down within 12 hours. Impacted users were notified in early July.</p> <p>The breach discovered in August was a result of a smishing attack launched in mid-July, which involved hundreds of text messages being sent to the phones of current and former Twilio employees. The messages appeared to come from IT administrators and urged recipients to click on a link that took them to a fake Okta login page.</p> <p>Some employees took the bait and entered their credentials on the phishing sites. The hackers then used these credentials to access internal tools and applications that allowed them to obtain certain customer information.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Indianapolis housing agency in ransom hit
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/indianapolis-low-income-housing-agency-hit-ransomware
GIST	<p>The federal agency that provides low-income housing in Indianapolis is facing a ransomware attack that's delayed its ability to send out rent payments to landlords, a top agency official says.</p> <p>All employees of the Indianapolis Housing Agency lost access to their email during the attack, which began weeks ago. That includes its executive director, Marcia Lewis, who lost access to her email for days but regained access to it Tuesday, The Indianapolis Star reported, citing an email she sent the newspaper.</p> <p>Lewis said an investigation by information technology security experts, law enforcement, and the agency's IT service providers is underway, and the attack was still ongoing as of Wednesday.</p> <p>The housing agency has not released details about the motive or identity of the individuals behind the ransomware attack, which uses malware to lock up a victim organization's files and leverage the information for a payment.</p>

	<p>The attack delayed the Indianapolis Housing Agency's ability to send out October rent payments to landlords for the federal housing choice voucher program, also known as Section 8, which 8,000 Indianapolis families depend on.</p> <p>That federal program provides rental assistance to very low-income families, the elderly, and disabled individuals for housing on the private market. The Indianapolis Housing Agency administers the program for Indianapolis.</p> <p>Lewis said that as Monday the agency successfully made all October rent payments to Section 8 landlords. But in the previous week, staff had to manually send out client utility allowance checks and critical vendor payments because the agency's IT system was down.</p> <p>Lewis said the agency is on track to complete all November rent payments on time.</p> <p>"It has been our focus to ensure recipients were not being negatively impacted and that we could bring our systems back to normal," she wrote in her email.</p> <p>The housing agency is currently working to address late fees due to the delayed Section 8 payments. Lewis said she does not have an estimate of the total cost of those late fees.</p> <p>According to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations regarding Section 8, landlords may not evict tenants for nonpayment by the agency, including in the current case.</p> <p>About 25,000 people depend on the Indianapolis Housing Agency for various housing benefits, either through Section 8 or by living in one of the agency-owned public housing buildings.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Dark web forum busts come days apart
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/two-illicit-dark-web-platform-operators-busted-days-apart
GIST	<p>A pair of splashy busts this week, one in the US and the other in Germany, demonstrates that global law enforcement teams are actively pursuing Dark Web forum criminal activity.</p> <p>On Oct. 26, the Northern District of Georgia filed charges against Daniel Kaye for his alleged operation of The Real Deal underground marketplace that sold malware, stolen credentials, and even money-laundering services, according to the Department of Justice statement.</p> <p>"This case is an example of our persistent determination to work with our international partners to hold criminals accountable no matter how sophisticated their cyber fraud or their geographic location," Keri Farley, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Atlanta, said about the charges. "Let this indictment be a message that the FBI and our partners place a high priority on the investigation and prosecution of hackers who intrude into our infrastructure and threaten the personal security of our citizens."</p> <p>As if to underscore the point, Bavarian authorities arrested a 22-year-old unnamed student for operating a platform called Germany on the Deep Web that law enforcement said is notorious for selling drugs and more under the motto, "No control, everything allowed."</p> <p>Maybe not everything.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Largest EU copper producer suffers hack
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/largest-eu-copper-producer-aurubis-suffers-cyberattack-it-outage/?&web_view=true
GIST	German copper producer Aurubis has announced that it suffered a cyberattack that forced it to shut down IT systems to prevent the attack's spread.

Aurubis is Europe's largest copper producer and the second largest in the world, with 6,900 employees worldwide, and produces one million tonnes of copper cathodes yearly.

In an announcement published on their website, Aurubis says they shut down various systems at their locations but that it has not impacted production.

"The production and environmental protection facilities at the smelter sites are running, and incoming and outgoing goods are also being maintained manually," comments Aurubis' announcement.

At this time, the company is still assessing the impact of the cyberattack, and is working closely with the authorities to speed up the process.

The priority now is to maintain the production volumes at normal levels and keep the raw material supply and the delivery of finished goods unruffled.

For this reason, some operations have turned to manual mode to keep the flow of incoming and outgoing goods adequate for as long as required until computer-assisted automation returns at the smelters.

Aurubis states that it's impossible to estimate how long it will take for all its systems to return to normal operations.

Until that happens, there's a plan to establish transitional solutions that will give the company and its customers an alternative communication channel. For now, the only way to reach Aurubis is via the phone.

While all the above carry the typical signs of a ransomware attack, Aurubis has not provided any details on its cyberattack.

However, Aurubis states that the attack "part of a larger attack on the metals and mining industry."

BleepingComputer has contacted the company to learn more about the incident, and we will update this post as soon as we receive a response.

The last time such a large metal producer was hit by ransomware was in March 2019, when LockerGoga forced aluminum giant Norsk Hydro to shut down its IT systems.

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HEADLINE	10/28 Bed & Bath possible data breach?
SOURCE	https://finance.yahoo.com/news/bed-bath-beyond-reviewing-possible-125236580.html?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>(Reuters) - Bed Bath & Beyond Inc said on Friday a third party had this month improperly accessed its data through a phishing scam by accessing the hard drive and certain shared drives of one of its employees.</p> <p>The big-box retailer said it was reviewing the data that was accessed so it can determine whether the drives contained any sensitive or personally identifiable information.</p> <p>The home goods retailer added it has no reason to believe that any sensitive or personally identifiable information was accessed and this cybersecurity incident would likely not have a material impact on the company.</p> <p>Shares of the company, once considered a so-called "category killer" in home and bath goods, were down about 5% in premarket trading after the company filed to offer \$150 million of common stock.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Vulnerable cyberspace economic warfare?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/28/us-is-vulnerable-economic-warfare-cyberspace/

The United States is highly vulnerable to foreign cyberattacks designed to damage the economy, and needs to do far more to defend against them, according to [a think tank report](#) out this morning.

The federal government has a “blind spot” for cyber-enabled economic warfare that could “cause a catastrophic strategic surprise” and destabilize U.S. critical infrastructure, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies concluded.

“We think that the United States government needs to do a lot more to understand, prevent and mitigate these types of attacks,” **Samantha Ravich**, chair of the foundation’s Center on Cyber and Technology Innovation, told reporters in advance of the report’s release.

Those steps include expanding the use of sanctions, improving intelligence collection and preparing for what happens if an attack causes major economic harm, the report states.

- The means of this kind of warfare — first mentioned in a government document in President Donald Trump’s [2017 cybersecurity strategy](#) — vary from U.S. adversary to U.S. adversary, according to the report.

Russia

Moscow has proven its capabilities to use its surveillance dragnet to pick U.S. targets. It’s also proven adept at penetrating U.S. critical infrastructure.

The most prominent case of Russia’s ability to infiltrate U.S. targets is [the SolarWinds hack](#), during which the attackers got into the IT supplier, enabling it to break into its customers, including nine federal agencies and more than 100 companies.

“Even if initially intended merely for espionage, gaining access to internal systems establishes a ‘beachhead’ that Russian actors can use to exert influence, sow disinformation, or even launch disruptive or destructive attacks against the American economy,” the report reads.

China

Beijing’s chief tool of cyber-enabled economic warfare (CEEW) against the United States has long been intellectual property theft, but it, too, has proven adept at penetrating U.S. networks. And it collects massive amounts of sensitive personal data on U.S. citizens.

In the political and economic spheres, China seeks control of information communications technology infrastructure and wants to become a world leader in producing it.

“To that end, Beijing combines state-directed support for national champions and barriers against foreign firms operating within its borders with illicit and hostile CEEW activities such as IP theft, cyber manipulation, and economic coercion,” the report states.

North Korea

Pyongyang employs cybercrime as a way of bolstering its finances, using the money to pay for its nuclear program.

It relies on [business email compromise](#), a kind of attack that costs the United States more than any other kind of cyber-related attack, as well as card-skimming to steal credit card information and especially, stealing hundreds of millions from cryptocurrency exchanges.

“They are positioning themselves to be able to take advantage of cryptocurrency-led financial orders. They’re stockpiling coins to use in this system,” **Annie Fixler**, deputy director of the foundation’s Center on Cyber and Technology Innovation, told reporters. “And they are also becoming very proficient at moving money around the system. So they’re looking at this long-term capability to be resilient against our use of economic sanctions to constrain their nuclear program and a number of other illicit activities that they engage in.”

Iran

Tehran hasn’t yet established that it’s as skilled as the others at striking at the United States’ economy, but it doesn’t appear to be for lack of trying.

	<p>When feuding with neighbors, Iran has used tactics like wiping data or infiltrating supply chain companies.</p> <p>“Iran is generally considered to be a less capable adversary from a technical perspective, but they are also less risk averse,” Fixler said. “And this is a dangerous combination” because it might not hold back, she said.</p>
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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	10/31 China, Pakistan probe suicide attack
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/alarmed-by-suicide-attack-china-pakistan-join-hands-probe-2022-10-31/
GIST	<p>KARACHI, Pakistan, Oct 31 (Reuters) - It was the kind of attack Pakistani authorities had dreaded.</p> <p>A highly educated female suicide bomber killed three Chinese teachers in Karachi in April along with their local driver, targeting nationals from Pakistan's most important partner and seeking to undermine a relationship on which Islamabad's financial survival largely depends.</p> <p>The blow threatened a major segment of Beijing's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, a \$65 billion network of roads, railways, pipelines and ports in Pakistan that will connect China to the Arabian Sea and help Islamabad expand and modernise its economy.</p> <p>Separatists from the vast, impoverished Pakistani province of Balochistan claimed responsibility for the attack after a young, educated mother from a well-to-do family blew herself up in an assault captured on CCTV and broadcast on local news channels.</p> <p>In a video on social media, the separatists warned China to leave Pakistan or face further carnage.</p> <p>Even though months have passed since the attack, Pakistani authorities remain deeply worried.</p> <p>"Attacks on the Chinese nationals and projects in Pakistan are of grave concern for the government," the interior ministry said in a statement to Reuters last week, adding that the government was in active pursuit of such militant outfits.</p> <p>The Baloch National Army (BLA), the banned group that issued the video, is part of a decades-old insurgency that usually targets Pakistani security forces.</p> <p>But in recent years the BLA has attacked Chinese nationals, because, it says, Beijing has ignored warnings not to enter deals and agreements regarding Balochistan.</p> <p>China is involved in major mining and infrastructure projects in the resource-rich province, including the deep-water Gwadar port, all part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).</p> <p>At the start of the video, a masked gunman addresses China. Speaking in English he says: "President of China ... you still have time to get out of Balochistan, otherwise you will be taken out of Balochistan in such a way that you will never forget."</p> <p>Shortly afterwards, schoolteacher Shari Hayat Baloch, 30, is filmed walking in a park with her young son and daughter and later addressing the camera in combat fatigues.</p> <p>Smiling and calm, the 30-year-old thanks fellow Baloch separatist fighters for giving her the "opportunity" to become the movement's first female suicide bomber.</p>

CONCERNS IN BEIJING

A team of Chinese officials travelled to Pakistan to assist in investigations, the interior ministry said, a sign of the seriousness Beijing attaches to the attack. The visit has not been previously reported.

The Chinese officials supported Pakistan's counter-terrorism forces in areas such as CCTV footage enhancement and data retrieval from cell phones, the ministry said.

The team left in late August after spending nearly two months trawling through tens of thousands of data files, according to four Pakistani sources directly involved in the probe. The leads they found helped Pakistani authorities zero in on the main suspect in the university attack, who was arrested in July.

China's foreign ministry did not reply to queries from Reuters. It has previously condemned the April 26 attack and demanded that Pakistan punish the perpetrators, protect Chinese citizens and prevent such incidents from happening again.

Security for Beijing's interests in Pakistan will be on the agenda during a visit by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to China this week, where he will be one of the first leaders to meet President Xi Jinping after he secured a third term in office.

PATH TO SUICIDE

Hayat - a science teacher who had a masters degree in Zoology - was planning to enrol in a second masters degree at the time she detonated explosives in her rucksack as a minivan carrying the three Chinese teachers drove by, police said.

The four officials involved in the probe said interviews with dozens of students, friends and relatives indicated that her path to radicalisation began at the university in the Balochistan capital Quetta through the Baloch Students Organization (BSO).

"It may be difficult to know exactly what provoked her to join the Baloch armed struggle," said an undated counter-terrorism department report on Hayat seen by Reuters.

"However, she remained a member of the Baloch Students Organization Azad in her student life," it said.

Unlike the broader BSO, its breakaway faction BSO Azad is banned by authorities who see it as an extreme wing of the Baloch campus movement.

Two BSO officials contacted by Reuters declined comment.

BSO Azad remains underground, and Reuters was unable to contact any of its senior leaders for comment. The BLA, also a banned organisation, did not respond to e-mailed requests for comment.

Two members of staff at Quetta University confirmed to Reuters that Hayat had been active in the BSO Azad when she studied Zoology there from 2011 to 2014. They declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the subject.

One of them recalled that the man Hayat later married, Habitan Baloch, was a leading figure in BSO Azad at the time.

BRAINWASHING

The four officials said another influential figure in Hayat's life appeared to be Karima Baloch, a leading Baloch activist who featured in the BBC's list of 100 inspirational and influential women in 2016.

Karima moved to Canada that year after saying she had received threats in Pakistan. Her body was found in the waters off Toronto in late 2020, an event that the officials believe prompted Hayat to join the BLA militants.

Toronto police have said they believed Karima's death to be a non-criminal matter.

According to two of the Pakistani investigators, as part of brainwashing, the wife of a slain former leader of the BLA spent time with Hayat and introduced her to families of people who had disappeared or whose bodies were found after they had gone missing.

On the day of the Karachi attack, Habitan, a dentist, tweeted that he was "beaming with pride" at what his wife had done.

The post has since been removed and Pakistani authorities say they do not know the whereabouts of Habitan or the couple's children. Reuters could not reach him via his social media profiles or relatives.

Hayat's father, Mohammed Hayat, a retired civil servant, told Reuters: "In our families, everyone talks about the resistance, that's a normal thing. I never knew that she could ever have extremist inclinations."

Following the bombing, Pakistani law enforcement agencies detained at least seven Baloch students across the country who were suspected of being involved.

All have since been released, a top counter-terrorism official said.

Pakistan has long blamed old enemy India for supporting the Balochistan insurgency. India, which has fought wars with both Pakistan and China, denies the charge.

KEY SUSPECT

The four officials said China's data analysis helped lead investigators to a man they say played a key role in coordinating the Karachi attack.

Dad Bukhsh, a 26-year-old Baloch separatist wanted by authorities for suspected involvement in previous attacks on Chinese targets, travelled from Karachi to the Afghan city of Kandahar in December, 2020, according to the officials.

There he received training in bomb making and armed combat and met several leaders of the Baloch insurgency who were in neighbouring Afghanistan at the time, the officials added.

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban, who were fighting their own insurgency against Western forces at that time, declined to comment on Bukhsh's activities. Reuters could not independently verify his alleged role in the April bombing.

According to two of the sources, Bukhsh returned to Karachi in July, 2021, and began to scope out the KANUPP nuclear plant, which is being expanded with Chinese technology and manpower and was considered a potential target for attack.

The interior ministry did not respond to a question on any potential KANUPP attack.

When the facility proved inaccessible, Bukhsh was invited by a BLA operative to meet Habitan, who communicated to him that the new target was to be Chinese teachers at Karachi University, the sources involved in the probe said.

Bukhsh enrolled in an English language course in a campus adjacent to the university in order to trace their daily movements.

In January, Hayat arrived in Karachi from Balochistan, and she and her husband moved from property to property over the following weeks as they prepared for the attack.

Return to Top	<p>On April 24, two days before the bombing, Habitan and Bukhsh left the city and went to Balochistan, according to the officials. Bukhsh returned to Karachi soon after making an alibi that he wasn't in the city on the day of the attack.</p> <p>Murtaza Wahab, an adviser to the provincial government in Sindh of which Karachi is the capital, said a joint team of counter-terrorism and intelligence agencies worked on different leads that resulted in Bukhsh's arrest in the city in July.</p> <p>Police have filed charges against Bukhsh in an anti-terrorism court, government prosecutor Zulfikar Ali Mahar told Reuters. He is in custody, and does not yet have a lawyer. Reuters was not able to contact him.</p> <p>Bukhsh will be tried on terrorism charges for killing Chinese nationals and launching an attack against the state's interests, Mahar said, adding, "We are waiting for the court to give us a date to start his trial."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/31 West Bank militants threaten Israel
SOURCE	https://www.cnnphilippines.com/world/2022/10/31/west-bank-israel-palestine-resistance.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — Four US-made M4 Carbine rifles lean against the back of the sofa. The young men, mostly dressed in black civilian clothes, are relaxed and chatty. Neighbors pop their heads in to say hello through a door open to the street.</p> <p>Which is odd.</p> <p>Because these men are being hunted, targeted for kill-or-capture in a new Israeli military campaign to try to stamp out a fast-growing armed insurrection in the north of the West Bank.</p> <p>The six men sip tea. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) says it's hunting them because they're members of an armed militant group that's planning more attacks against Israeli targets.</p> <p>"Martyr posters" cover most of the back wall. Young men from the Jenin Brigade, most of them killed in fighting with Israeli troops, smile from their photographs at their living comrades across the room. The men now fiddling with their phones know they themselves may move from the sofa to that wall. An Israeli military strike team could attack at any time.</p> <p>This is Jenin Refugee Camp. It's less than half a kilometer square, home to about 12,500 people and a hotbed of armed resistance against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank -- and the existence of the Jewish state itself -- for more than 20 years. Its tight alleys and ramshackle homes are densely packed, and crackle with tension.</p> <p>At midday it's shuttered while the neighboring town of Jenin is raucous with life. Locals say people mostly sleep during the day because at night there's often fighting.</p> <p>Earlier this year, eight Israeli civilians were killed in attacks in Tel Aviv and nearby Bnei B'rak by gunmen from around Jenin. Both of the militants in those incidents were killed.</p> <p>There has been a surge in armed assaults on Israeli troops and civilians this year. According to the IDF, there have been around 180 shooting incidents in Israel and the occupied territories this year, compared to 61 shooting attacks in 2021. The Israeli military and police have seized 900 weapons from Palestinians.</p> <p>Two days after we met, another Palestinian youth, aged 19 and a member of the Jenin Brigade's militant armed group, was killed when Israeli forces stormed Jenin in an operation against the militants.</p> <p>"Jenin is the hornets' nest," says IDF spokesman Lt. Col. Richard Hecht.</p> <p>Growing anger with Palestinian Authority</p>

Some of the M4 weapons cradled by the Palestinian militants have Hebrew etched onto them. "Senior Israeli commanders steal the weapons and they sell them. We buy them on the black market with money we raise ourselves," claims a leader with the Jenin Brigade at our secret meeting in Jenin Refugee Camp.

In 2020 a report by Israel's Knesset estimated that 400,000 illegal weapons were circulating in Israel. The IDF admits that weapons have been stolen but denies that "senior commanders" are likely to be involved.

Many, the IDF said, are smuggled into the West Bank. Hecht admits: "We're putting a big effort into the connectivity between criminal gangs and terrorism."

It's been the bloodiest 10 months since 2015 — at least 131 Palestinians (not counting Gaza) and 21 Israelis or foreigners have been killed this year.

But there's been a shift, too, not just in the level of armed attacks against Israeli targets and Israel's campaigns -- but a growing resentment towards the leadership of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Indeed, the militants of the Jenin Brigade who sit in the shade of olive trees to hide from Israeli surveillance drones had a barely hidden threat to make against the PA.

"This is a message to the Palestinian leadership: if they believe in the will of the Palestinian people, they have to join the resistance and give the resistance fighters the freedom to defend and protect our people," says the man who leads this delegation of fighters.

Without explicitly threatening the PA leadership, he said that it was hemorrhaging support even among the ranks of its own security forces. Numerous members of the PA's police force and other security agencies have been involved in attacking Israeli forces, he said.

Under agreements signed with Israel under the so-called Oslo peace process, the PA is supposed to cooperate on security issues with Israel.

Many other Palestinian factions condemn this as "collaboration" and, according to officials in the Israeli military, security cooperation has almost broken down in the north of the West Bank, especially around Jenin and nearby Nablus.

In 1999, members of Fatah, the main group in the Palestine Liberation Movement which still dominates the PA, were beginning to condemn their own leader openly. Back then that was Yasser Arafat — who had led the Palestinian cause for years.

Arafat's successor at the head of the PA is Mahmoud Abbas, known as Abu Mazen. At 87 his grip has slipped and a growing level of defiance against all that his authority has apparently failed to achieve is driving opposition in the West Bank.

The Jenin Brigade's demands of the Palestinian Authority to join a new fight last week prompted PA Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh to visit Jenin Camp.

He stood next to Fathi Hazem, the father of two sons killed by Israel — one who murdered three Israelis in Tel Aviv in a shooting attack at a bar. Both had been members of the Jenin Brigade.

No hope of a 'dignified life'

Whether out of choice or a need for political survival, the PA's "security cooperation" with the Israelis in the north of the West Bank has dwindled to almost nothing, an Israeli government official said.

This may be because any attempt to do so risks igniting a civil war between Palestinian militants and the Palestinian Authority.

The apparently unstoppable march of Israeli settlements into the West Bank, while peace talks with Israel have ceased, means that many Palestinians have no real hope of an independent or even prosperous future. This has provoked more violence.

On that, both the IDF spokesman and the fighters in Jenin Camp agree.

On the Israeli side, Lt. Col. Hecht, a former battalion commander says, "They're frustrated and disaffiliated and they are saying to all the organized Palestinian groups and the PA, 'we have had enough of you all -- we're sons of the Camp.' They don't identify with the five-star leadership of the PA in their fancy hotels around the world. They're now saying we're fighting for their manhood."

And in the West Bank, the Jenin Brigade leader concurs: "All Palestinian people — as a result of the [Israeli] occupation's daily violations, and invasions, and the formation of many extreme right-wing governments [in Israel] that weakened the PA and its organizations and leadership — have lost trust in all of the PA organizations."

"Most of our Palestinian youth that fight and are martyred have a university or college degree. They've lost hope of a dignified life," he adds.

But, we asked, given that during the last 20 years, the Israelis have got more settlements, and there has been no progress to independence from the Palestinian perspective, maybe a new path should be found? Isn't it time to put down your weapons and switch to non-violent protest?

He replies: "The occupation killed off all of the peaceful solutions, and here, on this land, there is no place for peaceful solutions with this Zionist Israeli occupation."

Asked if they are of the view that the Jewish state should be wiped out, he replies: "All armed factions and every militant does not believe in a two-state solution because this occupation did not, and will not, respect any peaceful agreement. I repeat this again, those [Israeli governments] are criminal gangs."

Does this mean that the two sides are stuck in a fatal embrace? "We always aim for victory, and not death. This occupation is sending messages to the international community that we are terrorists. We are not terrorists, we are resistance fighters for freedom," the commander replies.

But he agrees there are more young men flocking to the armed groups and setting up on their own.

Fast-growing threat

In Nablus, a group known as the "Lion's Den" is growing fast, outside the control of the PA or even Hamas or Islamic Jihad.

According to the IDF, "they think up a target and then go and ask funding from Hamas or Islamic Jihad but they don't take orders from anyone." Israeli forces are intent on trying to break up these armed groups and reduce the threat to Israel, Hecht says.

"We're very focused on precise intelligence: we're trying to contain it when we see ticking bombs, the movement of weapons, rhetoric and warnings online — then we move to stop it," he adds.

On Tuesday, joint Israeli security forces raided Nablus, targeting what they said was the leadership of the Lion's Den and an explosives factory. At least five Palestinian men were killed in the raid.

In Jenin, the Palestinian brigade commander talks of plans for operations with militants across the West Bank and abroad that would "spark a regional war" that would come out of the camp.

	<p>But the more the conflict grows and the bloodier it gets, the greater the chance of the Palestinian Authority being sucked into direct conflict with Israel — or that the PA leadership which governs most of the 3.1 million population, dissolves itself. The latter possibility is the outcome Israel most fears.</p> <p>If the Palestinian leadership in the PA disbanded and returned to full-time resistance across the whole of the West Bank, Israel would have to physically police the whole region — and pay for it.</p> <p>"The PA collapsing or dissolving is the biggest threat. Having us go back into the towns would be a living nightmare," says the Israeli government official.</p> <p>This would turn the clock back to the days before the Oslo peace process. To when Palestinian groups ran a worldwide violent campaign, including terrorist attacks, in the name of freedom. To when Israel was largely isolated internationally — and had to use its own money to fund its responsibilities to Palestinians living under its occupation.</p> <p>That may be exactly what the Jenin Brigade and others may be hoping for.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/31 Kansas woman led ISIS battalion faces jail
SOURCE	https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/10/31/us-woman-who-led-female-is-battalion-faces-up-to-20-years-in-prison/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON: An American woman who grew up on a farm in Kansas and joined the Islamic State in Syria, where she led an all-female military battalion, is to be sentenced Tuesday for providing support to a foreign terrorist group.</p> <p>Allison Fluke-Ekren, 42, faces up to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to terror charges in June in a US District Court in Alexandria, Virginia.</p> <p>“For at least eight years, Fluke-Ekren committed terrorist acts on behalf of three foreign terrorist organisations across war zones in Libya, Iraq, and Syria,” US attorney Raj Parekh said in a pre-sentencing memo.</p> <p>“Fluke-Ekren brainwashed young girls and trained them to kill,” Parekh said. “She carved a path of terror, plunging her own children into unfathomable depths of cruelty by physically, psychologically, emotionally, and sexually abusing them.”</p> <p>Parekh, urging Judge Leonie Brinkema to impose the maximum 20-year sentence, traced Fluke-Ekren’s path from her upbringing on an 81-acre (33-hectare) farm in Kansas to her apprehension in Syria after the 2019 territorial defeat of IS.</p> <p>While other Americans traveled to Syria and Iraq to join IS, most were men and Fluke-Ekren is the rare American woman who occupied a senior position in the ranks of the now-defunct so-called Islamic Caliphate.</p> <p>Born Allison Brooks, she grew up in a “loving and stable home” in Overbrook, Kansas, and was considered a “gifted” student, the US attorney said.</p> <p>She dropped out of high school in her sophomore year, however, and married a local man named Fluke, with whom she had two children.</p> <p>Her son from that marriage testified anonymously about years of abuse inflicted on him and his siblings by their mother.</p>

“My mother is a monster without love for her children, without an excuse for her actions,” said her son, who plans to attend Tuesday’s sentencing in Alexandria. “She has the blood, pain, and suffering of all of her children on her hands.”

After leaving her first husband, Fluke-Ekren attended the University of Kansas, where she married a fellow student named Volkan Ekren and became a Muslim. She later earned a teaching certificate from a college in Indiana.

They had five children together and adopted another after the child’s parents were killed as suicide bombers in Syria.

‘Extremist ideology and violence’

In 2008, the family moved to Egypt and in 2011 to Libya where, the US attorney said, “Fluke-Ekren’s dogged pursuit to obtain positions of power and influence to train young women in extremist ideology and violence began.”

They were in Benghazi in September 2012 when the militant group Ansar al-Sharia attacked the US mission and CIA office there, killing the US ambassador and three other Americans.

Fluke-Ekren, a fluent Arabic speaker, assisted Ansar al-Sharia by “reviewing and summarizing the contents of stolen US government documents.”

The family left Libya in late 2012 or early 2013 and moved around between Iraq, Turkey and Syria, becoming deeply involved with IS and living in the group’s Mosul stronghold for a time.

After Fluke-Ekren’s husband — the leader of an IS sniper unit — was killed in 2015 she forced their 13-year-old daughter to marry an IS fighter, according to the US attorney.

Fluke-Ekren, who adopted the nom de guerre Umm Mohammed al-Amriki after joining IS, would go on to marry three more times and have four more children.

Her fourth husband was an IS military leader who was responsible for the IS defense of Raqqa in 2017.

In 2017, Fluke-Ekren became the leader of a battalion of female IS members called “Khatiba Nusaybah,” which provided military training to more than 100 women and girls, according to the US attorney.

“During training sessions, Fluke-Ekren instructed the women and young girls on the use of AK-47 assault rifles, grenades, and explosive suicide belts” Parekh said.

“One of those children, some of whom were as young as 10 or 11-years-old, was her own daughter.”

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HEADLINE	10/30 Afghan criminals to be released in US?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/30/afghan-criminals-will-be-released-us-former-ice-di/
GIST	<p>Mohammad Tariq came to the U.S. as an Afghan evacuee. Now he is sitting in a Homeland Security Department detention facility while officials try to find out whether any other country is willing to take him off their hands.</p> <p>Tariq pleaded guilty to fondling a 3-year-old girl at the camp in Virginia where U.S. officials brought him. The incident violated the terms of his “parole” and made him a priority for deportation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.</p> <p>Right now, ICE isn’t sending Afghans back to their home country. The chance that a third country will agree to take a sex abuser isn’t high, so Tariq will probably end up back on U.S. streets.</p>

The same is true for Zabihullah Mohmand, who was charged with forcible sexual intercourse and was convicted of sexual assault, and Alif Jan Adil, who is serving a federal sentence for child pornography and abusive sexual contact with a juvenile.

ICE says it wants to deport both of them, but it's not likely to happen, said Tom Homan, who spent decades at ICE and ran the agency under President Trump. He said the situation in Afghanistan and a Supreme Court decision dictate their fates.

"The bottom line is most of them are probably going to end up being released," Mr. Homan told The Washington Times.

Under a 2001 Supreme Court ruling, ICE has a limit on the length of detention for immigrants.

What is known as the Zadvydas ruling said immigration detention is an administrative procedure meant to facilitate deportation. If the government has no firm prospect of deportation after six months and cannot show exceptional national security or public safety reasons, then the person should be freed.

Mr. Homan said even rape or child molestation cases usually don't meet that standard.

ICE declined to elaborate on its plans for the Afghans. Instead, the agency pointed a reporter to Homeland Security's general webpage for the Afghan airlift and welcome operation.

The agency did say in a statement that it was neither targeting nor granting leniency to anyone and that it makes decisions "regardless of nationality."

"ICE officers make associated decisions in a professional and responsible manner, informed by their experience as law enforcement officials and in a way that best protects against the greatest threats to the homeland, applying prosecutorial discretion when making such decisions, as do law enforcement officers in different agencies and offices throughout the nation," the agency said.

ICE halted deportations to Afghanistan during the Taliban takeover. Axios reported one deportation in February. A month later, Homeland Security announced Temporary Protected Status, effectively a deportation amnesty, for Afghans who were in the U.S. by March. Under TPS, the administration concluded that Afghanistan was too mired in chaos to accept returning nationals.

Mr. Homan said officials are searching for other countries willing to take the Afghans but have little hope for the cases that The Times inquired about.

Of the four cases, two of the Afghans have concluded their prison time and are in ICE custody. A third is still serving time in federal prison, and ICE says it has a "detainer" request for the man to be turned over when he completes his criminal sentence.

The agency declined to talk about the fourth case, involving Mohammad Haroon Imaad, who was accused of trying to strangle his wife and pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct. He was sentenced to time served.

Analysts said the agency's refusal to talk about that case likely suggests that Imaad has an asylum petition or other claim of protection pending and the agency is barred from talking about such cases.

Jessica Vaughan, policy studies director at the Center for Immigration Studies, said the cases showed "how botched the Afghan evacuation was" and exposed ICE's inability to handle criminals from countries where the U.S. won't deport.

"Some of these guys could be out on the street soon and potentially in a position to prey on new victims. As a direct result of the Zadvydas decision, Americans are now stuck with several thousand criminal aliens in their community whose home countries won't take them back and who should be behind bars," she said.

She said immigrants are aware of the 180-day time frame and some will refuse to assist ICE with repatriation. If the immigrants faced indeterminate detention in the U.S., Ms. Vaughan said, they might try to persuade their home countries to take them back.

“Over the years, Americans have witnessed the human cost of tying ICE’s hands in this way, with scores of examples of murders and more committed by these offenders after release,” she said.

According to a 2015 letter to senators, ICE said it had released nearly 2,500 criminals as a result of Zadvydas restrictions in 2014. Nearly a third were from Cuba, though immigrants from China were also major offenders.

Looking more broadly, ICE told senators that 24 of the immigrants it had to release because of Zadvydas restrictions from 2010 to 2014 were charged with murder by early 2015.

“It is long past time for Congress to act to give ICE more leeway to detain criminals and other deportable aliens from recalcitrant countries, and to create more penalties for countries that don’t cooperate, to increase the chances of removal, which is the real objective,” Ms. Vaughan said.

Nearly 80,000 evacuees were brought out of Afghanistan and to the U.S. under a special “parole” program during the Biden administration’s airlift operation.

The administration’s stated intent was to rescue allies who assisted the U.S. during its 20-year war effort.

In reality, many of those flown out of Afghanistan had no such connection and were instead Kabul residents lucky enough to get through the Taliban cordon and reach the airport.

Homeland Security said it ran the names of the new arrivals through its databases to try to weed out bad actors before they reached U.S. soil, though some with criminal records managed to make it anyway.

An inspector general has reported that Homeland Security didn’t always have access to a key Defense Department database that tracked information such as fingerprints taken from explosives or from inside al Qaeda caves.

Homeland Security leaders have disputed that report but have not revealed specific objections.

Once in the U.S., most evacuees were pushed into camps at military bases for more acclimation and vaccines, though an inspector general said thousands walked away from the bases without completing full processing.

Three of the four cases The Times explored involved crimes committed at the camps. The exception is the case of Mohman. Authorities said he met a young woman one night, went back to her hotel room and raped her. Mohman originally insisted that the sex was consensual.

Authorities recorded dozens of criminal investigations of Afghans at the military bases. The inspector general said others were never recorded because authorities didn’t want to make waves among the new arrivals and let community leaders within the camps settle issues.

In other cases, the inspector general said, local prosecutors declined to bring charges.

That, plus the fact that the Afghans are now dispersed throughout the county, makes it impossible to estimate the overall level of criminality.

A general in charge of the camps last year asserted that the crime level was lower than the U.S. population.

Still, the difficulty of dealing with those who do cross lines is now facing the government.

	“Rule No. 1 [is] once they reach the United States, no matter how bad they get, they’re here,” one Homeland Security official told The Times. “Even if you vet them and they’re terrorists, you can’t get rid of them.”
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HEADLINE	10/30 Militants attack Burkina Faso forces, kill 13
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/at-least-13-military-personnel-killed-in-burkina-faso-in-attack-by-suspected-terrorists/ar-AA13x0U7
GIST	<p>At least 13 military personnel were killed in Burkina Faso on Saturday in an attack allegedly carried out by an armed terrorist group wearing the same leopard attire as the Burkinabe soldiers, who were caught en route to Natiaboani, in the southeast of the country.</p> <p>The soldiers had left Fada N’Gourma in that direction in search of relief, although civilians and volunteers “for the defense of the homeland”, i.e. military auxiliaries, were also in the convoy, according to a local source quoted by Radio France International (RFI).</p> <p>In particular, the attack took place in the locality of Kikideni, located almost halfway along the route that the soldiers had planned to travel.</p> <p>According to the source consulted by the French radio station, the attackers were dressed like the Burkinabe soldiers, got into the convoy and joined the team. The death of 13 people has been confirmed in a preliminary report by the security forces, according to the same source.</p> <p>Earlier in the week, ten other soldiers were killed in the town of Djibo, in a clash in which 18 jihadists were also killed and more than 50 people were wounded.</p> <p>This Monday, the Patriotic Defense and Vigilance Brigade, a paramilitary force of volunteers enlisted to fight terrorism, launched a new call for the recruitment of 15,000 new members of this militia.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Diplomatic fallout South Africa, US?
SOURCE	https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/638969/terrorism-warning-things-are-about-to-get-awkward-between-south-africa-and-the-us/
GIST	<p>Several large events and gatherings took place in Sandton and other parts of the country on Saturday (29 October), with citizens largely shrugging off a terrorism alert from the US embassy earlier in the week.</p> <p>The embassy warned on Wednesday (26 October) that a terrorist attack might happen in Africa’s richest square mile, targeting large gatherings. The alert did not specify who was being targeted or how the attack might happen – but warned US citizens to avoid the region on the 29th and 30th of October.</p> <p>The alert was followed by other embassies – like the UK, Canadian, French, German and Australian missions – issuing similar warnings to their citizens.</p> <p>President Cyril Ramaphosa responded to the alert by calling it “unfortunate”, while security structures in the country were frustrated by the lack of information coming from the US embassy on the matter – ultimately taking the position that there is not enough evidence pointing to an actual threat, telling South African citizens that they would be safe.</p> <p>The police and other security officials were put on standby, businesses ran security drills, and event runners doubled their security efforts for the gatherings – and everything planned for Saturday went off without a hitch.</p> <p>All that remains is the diplomatic fallout.</p>

Speaking to the City Press and Sunday Times, various sources have pointed to a gathering storm between South Africa and the United States over the matter.

Deputy minister in the presidency for State Security, Zizi Kodwa, is already on record stating that [there will be repercussions for the US embassy breaking protocol](#) on matters like this and undermining South Africa's sovereignty and bringing South Africa's security strength and intelligence capabilities into question.

Sources within the security sector [speaking to the City Press](#), however, have speculated that there may have been an ulterior motive by the US in issuing the alert – such as setting the groundwork for installing a military presence in the country.

Other sources – [speaking to the Sunday Times](#) – said a diplomatic incident is looming over the role the US alert played in undermining and scuppering almost a year's worth of work done by local security officials in tracking and monitoring the terrorist groups allegedly linked to the potential attacks.

Despite the different views on the matter, authorities agreed on one thing: the US did not share any solid or useful information with South Africa, leading to widespread speculation and panic, and creating undue anxiety among the population.

However, independent security experts said that information would have been shared with the country, but there is no guarantee it was shared with the right people or that it would make its way through the appropriate networks.

Senior Training Coordinator at ENACT Programme at the Institute for Security Studies, Willem Els said that [South Africa has already demonstrated it cannot effectively handle security intelligence](#), referring to the complete intelligence breakdown during the July 2021 riots and alleged insurrection.

“They did not really manage to gather all the information. That may not be the case here, but it is a possibility,” he said.

On the other hand, foreign missions have the mandate to take care of their citizenry. “We know that several foreign missions picked up on this – if we (South Africa) picked up on credible threats in other countries, we would follow the same route (of issuing alerts).”

He said that the government's position that information wasn't shared was “complete nonsense”.

Martin Ewi, senior researcher at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) said that sharing information is standard protocol before issuing alerts, and it was likely that the information simply never reached the appropriate people in government.

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HEADLINE	10/29 Govt warns domestic attack threats rise
SOURCE	https://www.npr.org/2022/10/29/1132537240/government-warns-domestic-attacks-midterm-elections
GIST	<p>U.S. security agencies have issued a heightened threat advisory, warning of a potential attacks on political candidates, election officials and others. The alert came Friday, the same day that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband was attacked in their San Francisco home.</p> <p>NPR has obtained the bulletin issued by the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the National Counterterrorism Center, and the U.S. Capitol Police.</p> <p>Attacks conducted by lone actors pose the most plausible threat to potential targets, the bulletin warned. The risk of violence is fueled by an increase in domestic violent extremism, and those carrying out the attacks would likely do so for ideological reasons.</p>

Most individuals are likely to cite the 2020 presidential election, repeating the false narrative that the results were skewed, and that former-President Donald Trump was the rightful winner, according to the warning.

Since 2021, perceptions of a fraudulent election have contributed to several attacks or violent plots, and the bulletin added that new theories of fraud undermining the midterm elections have been emerging.

The advisory said that last month, domestic violent extremists were identified as claiming the electoral system of being "under attack" and threatened violence against politicians.

With less than two weeks before Election Day, President Biden on Friday called on political figures to ["clearly and unambiguously" reject political violence](#), calling the attack on the Pelosi "despicable."

The president, citing news reports, drew ties between what Friday's attacker allegedly said — chanting, "Where's Nancy?" — and what rioters said while storming the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

"What makes us think that one party can talk about stolen elections, COVID being a hoax, it's all a bunch of lies — and it not affect people who may not be so well-balanced? What makes us think that it's not going to corrode the political climate?" he said.

In the bulletin, law enforcement officials warned that the threat of violence extends beyond just politicians, with religious minorities also listed as a potential target.

"We assess some [domestic violent extremists] motivated by election-related grievances would likely view election-related infrastructure, personnel, and voters involved in the election process as attractive targets — including at publicly accessible locations like polling places, ballot drop-box locations, voter registration sites, campaign events, and political party offices," the bulletin said.

It warned that extremists could target election-related locations in hopes of "swaying voting habits, undermining perceptions of the legitimacy of the voting process, or prompting a government reaction."

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HEADLINE	10/30 Fear rising 'incel' culture provoke terrorism
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/oct/30/global-incel-culture-terrorism-misogyny-violent-action-forums
GIST	<p>Almost 1,000 references to dehumanising misogyny or violent action are recorded each day in the “incelosphere” as the toxicity of male supremacist content continues to intensify.</p> <p>Analysis of the incel movement found that online references to inflicting violence and extremely degrading language on dedicated incel forums are running eight times higher than in 2016, when researchers first began tracking misogynist content on the internet.</p> <p>Academics from the University of Exeter also noted an increasing overlap between incel followers and the far right, with online algorithms blamed for pushing young boys towards extreme rightwing ideology.</p> <p>Lewys Brace, who advises the government on extremism, led a long-term study that recorded, on average, 112 references a day to extreme misogynistic terms along with words “punch, stab, shoot, attack” in 2016 on dedicated incel forums.</p> <p>Numbers have steadily increased since, now rising to a daily total of 849 references, prompting fears over the movement’s trajectory following a series of terrorist attacks linked to online misogynists.</p> <p>The incel – or “involuntarily celibate” – movement is an online subculture in which a misogynistic worldview is promoted by individuals who blame women for their lack of sexual activity.</p>

Incels have been linked to [violent extremism](#) and are classified by the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, as having a "mixed, unstable or unclear" ideology.

The most recent data reveals that such ideologies account for more than half of all referrals to Prevent. Brace, a lecturer in data analysis at Exeter, said: "The incelosphere is definitely growing and diversifying and has increased in the toxicity of its discussions since 2016.

"The cross pollination of ideologies is helping to drive this."

He singled out YouTube whose content recommendation algorithms, he claimed, had in the past pushed users "towards increasingly extreme content; particularly in the case of anti-woman/feminist content". YouTube says its recommendation system is designed to limit the spread of harmful misinformation and point people to authoritative sources.

This week, [research](#) funded by the UK's Home Office and security and intelligence agencies will reveal the extent of "incel contagion" online and the growing threat posed by male supremacist ideology at a Dublin conference showcasing new studies documenting the internet.

Brace said the volume of references to committing violence should be taken seriously, with more than 50 cases of incel-related violence documented since 2014.

Cases include the murder of five people in August 2021 in [Plymouth by Jake Davison](#), who expressed misogynistic views on online incel forums.

Another involves Gabrielle Friel, who in 2019 amassed weapons in preparation for a terrorist attack in Scotland and who "idolised" incel Elliot Rodger, who killed six people in California in 2014. One concerning dynamic, said Brace, was how boys as young as 12 were being drawn into misogynistic ideology.

Recent [police figures](#) reveal that more under-18s were arrested in the 12 months to March 2022 than any other year, with senior counter-terrorism officers describing the trend as of "real concern".

This month, the Department for Education [published new safeguarding guidance](#) regarding the radicalisation of young people, warning that some may target gender or other protected characteristics, but "do not otherwise identify with one particular terrorist ideology or cause – for example, involuntary celibates (incels) who direct their anger mainly at women".

However, the government's independent reviewer of terrorism legislation cautioned that, despite the rising number of arrests of young people, only one child had been imprisoned for terrorism in the last two years. Jonathan Hall KC, told the *Observer* that the old-school approach to tackling terrorist offending needed to be recalibrated in the case of children.

"This discrepancy between numbers of arrests and sentences of imprisonment shows that the traditional method of prosecution, conviction and incarceration as a way of managing terrorist risk is no longer in play."

Hall also stressed that, increasingly, a distinction needed to be made between terrorism and something falling short of terrorism, which could be described as extremism.

"Although we have to be careful about trying to codify extremism because, as has been found time and time again, extremism is a concept without natural boundaries."

Brace said: "At the heart of the debate lies the question of how concerning discussions on online incel spaces are; a question further exacerbated by the manner in which the incel subculture is amorphous and evolving."

	He said the movement had evolved from a series of subreddits to dedicated forums – the “incelosphere” – but which were now spreading across other online spaces, such as Instagram, TikTok, Discord and Twitch.
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HEADLINE	10/29 Australia: 17 repatriated from Syria camps
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/29/world/australia/isis-detention-australians-return.html
GIST	<p>MELBOURNE, Australia — Seventeen Australian citizens — four women and 13 children — on Thursday began the long journey home from detention camps in northeast Syria, where they have languished since the fall of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, also known as ISIS, in 2019.</p> <p>By Saturday, they had returned to New South Wales, Australia, according to a statement from Clare O’Neil, the Australian minister for home affairs.</p> <p>“The focus has been the safety and security of all Australians as well as the safety of those involved in the operation,” Ms. O’Neil said. “Informed by national security advice, the Government has carefully considered the range of security, community and welfare factors in making the decision to repatriate.”</p> <p>Dozens of other Australians are still being held at the camps. But there are hopes that this will be the first of several releases sponsored by the government. Many of the people who remain are children who have spent most or even all of their lives in detention.</p> <p>After the collapse of ISIS, human rights groups and family members around the world called on governments to bring home the wives and children of the group’s fighters who had been left behind amid the ravages of war. But security concerns and political wrangling have kept many repatriations on hold, sometimes for years.</p> <p>In July, France reversed course by bringing home 16 women and 35 children, some of whom were orphans. The country had formerly resisted calls to repatriate adult women who had left home to join the Islamic State, saying it considered them “fighters” who should be tried not in France but in the places where they were accused of committing crimes.</p> <p>Last month, Europe’s top human rights court called on the French government to bring home the families of two Islamic State fighters, in a landmark ruling that may push other European countries to speed up the repatriation of nationals in Syria.</p> <p>In Australia, family members have for years been lobbying the government to bring their children or grandchildren home. But the decision to repatriate the families, which families learned via news reports earlier this month, was a shock, said Kamalle Dabboussy, whose 31-year-old daughter, Mariam Dabboussy, has been living in one of the camps with her three children.</p> <p>“I actually stopped,” he said in an interview this month, of his reaction to the reports that the women and children would soon be returning to Australia. “I couldn’t breathe for a few minutes, totally overwhelmed, couldn’t believe what I was reading.”</p> <p>Off the back of devastating wildfires, the shock of the coronavirus pandemic and a change in government, any progress he and other families had once made with the Australian government seemed to have been lost.</p> <p>“Unfortunately, the whole world was disrupted by Covid,” Mr. Dabboussy said. “And these women and children ended up suffering longer than needed to, by virtue of being in the camps.”</p> <p>The Australian government last repatriated Australians from Syria in 2019, when the six orphaned children and grandchildren of Khaled Sharrouf, a notorious Islamic State fighter, returned to live with their grandmother and great-grandmother, Karen Nettleton.</p>

	<p>But under Scott Morrison, the former Australian prime minister, the government adopted a hard-line approach and declined to repatriate more people from the camps. A change in government after the federal election this year appears to have heralded a different approach.</p> <p>Speaking at a news conference on Friday, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia did not address the repatriations directly, but said: “My government will always act to keep Australians safe and will always act on the advice of the national security agencies.”</p> <p>Rights groups applauded the decision to return the women and children to Australia, but noted that the process had been long and painful. “It can’t come soon enough for these kids, who’ve been living in desperate conditions for the last three and a half years,” Mat Tinkler, the chief executive officer of Save the Children Australia, said earlier this month. “These kids have lived through hell.”</p> <p>The children face health challenges, Mr. Tinkler said. “Some of them have untreated shrapnel injuries, and they’ve been living in camps for the last three and a half years, where there’s very limited access to health support and nutritious food.”</p> <p>Moreover, successful readjustment to life in Australia after the pressures of living in a war zone, with little education, is likely to take major psychological and social support, he added. “It’s going to require significant adjustment for them. They’ve been in a very difficult context.”</p> <p>Al-Hol is one of the camps where the families have been held. A sea of white tents in drought-stricken northeastern Syria, it is inhabited by 55,000 people, mostly women and children, roughly half of them younger than 12. About 25 murders have taken place at the camp this year.</p> <p>The Australian government now faces the challenge of reintegrating those returning into a society that may feel very unfamiliar. Some may also be subject to investigation by law enforcement agencies in Australia, Ms. O’Neil said.</p> <p>Living under such bleak and brutal conditions, the children left in the camps are especially vulnerable to radicalization, experts say. At least 50 Australians still remain in detention in Syria, according to Human Rights Watch.</p> <p>On Saturday morning, some families were reunited for the first time in years. Seeing his daughter and grandchildren in a hotel room in Sydney was a profoundly emotional experience, Mr. Dabboussy said.</p> <p>“It was totally ecstatic,” he said. The first thing his daughter said, he recalled, was, “Dad, you did it, you did it. You got us home.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Somalia car bombings kill 100, wound 300
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/al-qaida-africa-bombings-somalia-shabab-2bb9ec7346e3eba9d34452b3458acd10?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=TopNews&utm_campaign=position_06
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) — Somalia’s president says at least 100 people were killed in Saturday’s two car bombings at a busy junction in the capital and the toll could rise in the country’s deadliest attack since a truck bombing at the same spot five years ago killed more than 500.</p> <p>President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, at the site of the explosions in Mogadishu, told journalists that nearly 300 other people were wounded. “We ask our international partners and Muslims around the world to send their medical doctors here since we can’t send all the victims outside the country for treatment,” he said.</p> <p>The al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab extremist group, which often targets the capital and controls large parts of the country, claimed responsibility, saying it targeted the education ministry. It claimed the ministry was</p>

an “enemy base” that receives support from non-Muslim countries and “is committed to removing Somali children from the Islamic faith.”

Al-Shabab usually doesn’t make claims of responsibility when large numbers of civilians are killed, as in the 2017 blast, but it has been angered by a high-profile new offensive by the government that also aims to shut down its financial network. The group said it is committed to fighting until the country is ruled by Islamic law, and it asked civilians to stay away from government areas.

Somalia’s president, elected this year, said the country remained at war with al-Shabab “and we are winning.”

The attack in Mogadishu occurred on a day when the president, prime minister and other senior officials were meeting to discuss expanded efforts to combat violent extremism and especially al-Shabab. The extremists, who seek an Islamic state, have responded to the offensive by killing prominent clan leaders in an apparent effort to dissuade grassroots support.

The attack has overwhelmed first responders in Somalia, which has one of the world’s weakest health systems after decades of conflict. At hospitals and elsewhere, frantic relatives peeked under plastic sheeting and into body bags, looking for loved ones.

Halima Duwane was searching for her uncle, Abdullahi Jama. “We don’t know whether he is dead or alive but the last time we communicated he was around here,” she said, crying.

Witnesses to the attack were stunned. “I couldn’t count the bodies on the ground due to the (number of) fatalities,” witness Abdirazak Hassan said. He said the first blast hit the perimeter wall of the education ministry, where street vendors and money changers were located.

An Associated Press journalist at the scene said the second blast occurred in front of a busy restaurant during lunchtime. The blasts demolished tuk-tuks and other vehicles in an area of many restaurants and hotels.

The Somali Journalists Syndicate, citing colleagues and police, said one journalist was killed and two others wounded by the second blast while rushing to the scene of the first. The Aamin ambulance service said the second blast destroyed one of its responding vehicles.

It was not immediately clear how vehicles loaded with explosives again made it to the high-profile location in Mogadishu, a city thick with checkpoints and constantly on alert for attacks.

The United States has described al-Shabab as one of al-Qaida’s deadliest organizations and targeted it with scores of airstrikes in recent years. Hundreds of U.S. military personnel have returned to the country after former President Donald Trump withdrew them.

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HEADLINE	10/29 US releases Gitmo’s oldest prisoner
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/29/us/politics/oldest-prisoner-gitmo-terrorism.html
GIST	<p>GUANTÁNAMO BAY, Cuba — The United States has released the U.S. military’s oldest prisoner of the war on terror, a 75-year-old businessman who was held for nearly two decades as a suspected sympathizer of Al Qaeda but was never charged with a crime.</p> <p>The man, Saifullah Paracha, a former legal resident of New York, was one of Guantánamo’s most unusual and better known “forever prisoners.” Military prosecutors never sought to put him on trial, but review panels considered him too dangerous to release until last year.</p> <p>His transfer, in a secret military mission announced by the Pakistani government on Saturday, culminated months of negotiations to arrange his return. The Pentagon declined to comment. It was not known if</p>

Biden administration officials imposed any security restrictions on Mr. Paracha, but a lawyer swiftly released a photo of the former prisoner sitting in a McDonald's in Karachi, Pakistan.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry [said in a statement on Saturday](#) that it had "completed an extensive interagency process to facilitate repatriation of Mr. Paracha" and that it was "glad that a Pakistani citizen detained abroad is finally reunited with his family."

Mr. Paracha arrived at Guantánamo in the early days of detention operations, when hundreds of young men captured abroad filled cellblocks at the seafront compound.

Just before he left, the 21st commander of prison operations, a National Guard general from Michigan, had taken charge and the detainee population had dwindled to three dozen. Of them, 21 have been approved for transfer to the custody of another country with security arrangements that satisfy the secretary of defense; for example, participation in a rehabilitation program.

At Guantánamo, Mr. Paracha stood out among the predominantly younger Muslim men, most of whom were captured in their teens and 20s by Afghan or Pakistani militias and turned over to the United States as presumptive foot soldiers of Al Qaeda or the Taliban.

He was captured in July 2003 at age 56 in an F.B.I. sting operation in Thailand. Businessmen posing as Kmart representatives lured him from his home in Karachi, Pakistan, to Bangkok to discuss what turned out to be a bogus merchandising deal. Instead, intelligence agents seized, hooded and shackled him and flew him to Afghanistan.

Mr. Paracha was held first at a U.S. military prison in Bagram, Afghanistan, where he had a heart attack, his lawyers said. Rather than send him to the secret prison network run by the C.I.A., where prisoners were tortured, the Bush administration moved him to Guantánamo in his 14th month of U.S. detention. He became an early example of the challenge of holding aging and infirm prisoners at the remote U.S. Navy base, which flies in military medical specialists from the United States.

"Saifullah should never have been in Guantánamo," said Clive Stafford Smith, a human rights lawyer who has been visiting him at the prison since 2005. "Because he was the oldest person there, I constantly feared he would have his fourth heart attack and die there. So I am so happy that he is finally going home."

He had long suffered from diabetes, coronary artery disease and high blood pressure, but would not have heart surgery at Guantánamo, which sends residents to the United States for cardiac treatment.

In his early years of custody, the prison airlifted a mobile cardiac catheterization lab to the base for the procedure, but he said through lawyers that he wanted to have the operation in a hospital that specialized in heart care in either the United States or Pakistan.

In April 2019, a photograph of him reading inside a communal cell appeared with an article in The New York Times about a [U.S. military effort to adapt detention facilities](#) for wartime prisoners who were expected to die at Guantánamo.

In his file, U.S. intelligence agencies [said he had](#) helped [Khalid Shaikh Mohammed](#), the accused mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, "facilitate financial transactions and propaganda" after the attacks, and said he met with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan before the attacks as part of a delegation of Pakistani dignitaries.

For his part, Mr. Paracha claimed in an unsuccessful federal court petition for his release that he did not know Mr. Mohammed's true identity or his role in [the Sept. 11 plot](#). He said he held some money for him and allowed Mr. Mohammed's nephew to use an editing studio in Karachi out of a sense of Muslim kinship, not ideology, and he denounced violence and denied affiliation with Al Qaeda.

Months before he was captured, federal agents took Mr. Paracha's eldest son, Uzair, into custody in New York, where he was living. He was tried, convicted and sentenced to 30 years in prison for providing material support to terrorism.

But Uzair Paracha's conviction was [overturned in 2018](#). Then in 2020, prosecutors dropped the case against him. He was [returned to Pakistan](#) after agreeing to relinquish his status as a permanent resident of the United States.

The elder Mr. Paracha, who is fluent in English, had [lived in Queens in the 1970s](#), obtained a green card in 1980, and operated businesses in Pakistan and the New York metropolitan region, including travel agencies, a real estate business and a media production firm.

At Guantánamo, inmates and some guards called him "chacha," a term of endearment that means uncle in Urdu. When the prison leadership allowed, he [tutored younger prisoners in English and finance](#). At times he brought cellblock complaints to the guards.

Soon after his transfer to Guantánamo in 2004, Mr. Paracha went before a panel of American military officers that approved his status as an "enemy combatant," a form of war prisoner. He denied having ties to Al Qaeda, described himself as a businessman with a Jewish partner and challenged the notion that the United States could declare the world a battlefield against the terrorist group.

"Is your executive order applicable around the earth?" he asked the U.S. military officer in charge, according to a Pentagon transcript.

"It is a global war on terrorism," the officer explained.

Mr. Paracha replied, "I know, sir, but you are not the master of the earth, sir."

His wife, whom he met and married in the United States, divorced him while he was in custody. He was expected to live with his youngest son, Mustafa, who said in an interview last year that the first order of business would be a family reunion, followed by comprehensive medical care.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	10/30 Along drought-withered Mississippi River
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/30/mississippi-river-drought-impacts/
GIST	<p>Historically low water levels have caused far-reaching concerns over yet another rupture in the international supply chain and what that could mean overseas and for typical Americans. The Mississippi, after all, is the nation's aquatic superhighway, carrying roughly 60 percent of the nation's corn and soybean exports south, and critical supplies such as fertilizer and fuel back north.</p> <p>But along the Mississippi, the worries these days are more visceral and immediate.</p> <p>A scorching summer has given way to a dusty and disquieting fall for those who depend on the river, with few signs of relief in sight. Drive through communities that line its banks, and you will encounter a mixture of faith, frustration, anxiety and acceptance — along with agreement that few can remember a time when the mighty river has been so weakened.</p> <p>Here are some of their stories:</p> <p>Finley, Tenn. — 'A blessing and a curse' Jeremiah Hollingsworth climbed down from the massive combine that had been rumbling across his family's 4,200 acres, harvesting soybeans on yet another bone-dry fall day.</p>

He stood on the land his father and grandfather had farmed, steps from the earthen levee that overlooks the Mississippi. He'd seen the river's [waters swell](#) many times, including in 2011, when the river inundated the farm and flooded an equipment garage and multiple family homes.

But now, a shrunken, drought-stricken river was forcing hard choices. Prices for his crops had fallen as the cost to transport them spiked. Local grain elevators had run out of capacity as they competed for space on the few barges headed south.

"It's halting our progress drastically," he said.

For the first time, Hollingsworth had decided to store tens of thousands of bushels of beans in plastic containers. He would sell them weeks from now when, he hoped, he could get a better price and barges could again reliably [navigate to New Orleans](#).

Waiting was risky, but then life along these banks always has been. Those who depend on it long ago learned to take the good with the bad, to have faith that better days lie ahead.

"The river is a blessing and a curse," said Hollingsworth, 45. "Every year has got its differences."

Wickliffe, Ky. — 'I can handle a flood'

Down a long and winding dirt road sits a concrete boat ramp stretching 200 feet down an embankment. It doesn't look like much, but it's awfully important spot to Larry Barnes.

For decades, he and his employees at Barnes Marine Services have delivered groceries and other supplies to the barge crews traversing the river. These days, that job is proving more daunting than ever.

Over a 120-mile stretch of parched river, this is the one remaining boat access ramp from where he can reliably launch a 24-foot boat full of supplies. The other ramps that dot the banks are no longer long enough to reach the shrunken river.

"The water isn't even up on them," he said. "It's making it tougher to do what we do."

Barnes figures his business has fallen off about 15 percent over the past month as river traffic has stalled and [dredging operations](#) have closed the river in numerous places, leaving barges backed up with nowhere to go.

Like so many others, Barnes has carried on through his share of river flooding. He also remembers past droughts, in 1980, 1988 and 2012. This bout is as rough as any he can recall.

"I can handle a flood better than I can handle a drought. I think everyone on the river will tell you that," he said. "It's at a standstill right now."

But experience tells him that this scourge will pass.

"It'll come and go," Barnes said. "You keep plugging along. And have faith. And just pray that it'll start raining."

Osceola, Ark. — '\$50 million is sitting here'

In the fall, the heartland's economic engine is on full display along roads up and down the river, where flat, fertile land stretches toward the horizon. Mile after mile, against the backdrop of changing leaves, farmers are harvesting endless rows of golden soybeans and corn, their tractors enveloped by clouds of dust rising from the thirsty soil.

Massive trucks loaded with grains rumble along narrow country roads, heading toward the river and the grain elevators that purchase crops and send them south toward the Gulf of Mexico.

Only when you reach the river's edge, at places like Poinsett Rice & Grain's loading facility, do the immediate impacts of the drought become startling and unmistakable.

"Probably close to \$50 million is sitting here," said Jeff Worsham, the port's manager, as he stood high on a loading dock, looking out over the roughly 75 barges stranded in this small offshoot of the Mississippi.

Below, trucks heavy with soybeans from nearby farms continued to pull into the grain elevator complex. But Worsham has only so much room left to put the crops he buys from farmers these days.

With restrictions on how many barges can travel on the river at a time, as well as limits on how heavily each can be loaded, the logjam isn't likely to ease anytime soon. And higher transportation costs are sure to cut into his bottom line.

Worsham's quandary in this one corner of the Mississippi is a microcosm of the struggle playing out again and again these days.

"I've been here 20 years, and we've never had this issue," Worsham said. "Normally, high water is what causes us pain."

Two of the facility's loading docks were out of commission on this day, the water too low for loading barges. Nearby, Worsham pointed to massive plastic grain bags, each stuffed with about 30,000 bushels — or about 30 truck loads — of soybeans. He can store the crops there for a while, but each day they sit brings more risk.

"It's the first time we've ever done that," he said.

Worsham hopes it's that last time, but he isn't so sure. The river seems to experience more violent fluctuations now than it did long ago, he said.

"It rises fast and falls fast. It makes it difficult because you don't know what to expect," Worsham said. "It's always been unpredictable, but it just seems like it's more extreme than it used to be."

Cairo, Ill. — A river traffic jam

Standing at the tip of Fort Defiance State Park, at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, it's impossible not to encounter history.

It was here that Ulysses S. Grant helped launch efforts to give the Union control of the Mississippi River during the Civil War. And before that, where Lewis and Clark [set up camp](#), practicing navigation skills they would need on their journey west. And where, before any of them, Native Americans populated these and other fertile lands nearby.

On a recent morning, history of another kind was being made.

Barges were parked alongside the river banks as far as the eye could see. Their tug boats, with names such as Addi Belle and Miss Deborah and Harvest Maiden, sat idle in a way that tugs on the Mississippi rarely do.

Just down the river, Casey Showers was standing on a tug that had slowly worked its way north from Vicksburg, Miss. He has spent more than six years working on the vessels that travel the river, pushing barges through the heart of the country. But this most recent trip had startled him in a way few others had.

"There was no traffic," said Showers, 29. "A lot of people just aren't moving."

Showers, a steersman, said even many of the old-timers he encounters say water levels are lower than they can remember. But stay on the river long enough, they tell him, and you will see everything.

“The river does what she wants,” Showers said, “We just work with her.”

Memphis — ‘It’s going to impact all of us’

Tourists still flock to the gates of Graceland and the Stax Museum of American Soul Music. From the barbecue joints to the bustling, neon-studded bars of Beale Street, a sense of normalcy reigns in Tennessee’s second-largest city.

It’s only by the waterfront that nothing seems quite normal. In recent days, water levels here hit [historic lows](#). The city’s famed riverboats, while still running, are docked far down a steep embankment usually covered by water. Gawkers come, cameras in hand, to snap photos of the withered river.

“It’s the worst I’ve seen in my lifetime,” said John Butler on a recent afternoon. He’s a fifth-generation farmer from West Tennessee but now runs a Memphis-based educational and research nonprofit, [Agricenter International](#).

Even in the city, his thoughts are with farmers out in the countryside.

“It’s feast or famine when you farm along the river,” he said, explaining that this year alone, farmers grappled with soaring fertilizer prices and crippling amounts of rain early in the year, followed by scorching summer heat and now drought.

When Butler looks out at the strangely quiet river, he thinks of the crops that aren’t making their way south, the supplies that aren’t coming north and the reverberations that have yet to come.

“It’s going to impact all of us,” Butler said. “It’s really catastrophic.”

Nearby, at the Memphis Yacht Club, a different kind of disaster is on display.

General manager Joe Weiss points to a nearby piling, where the high-water mark from the flood of 2011 is shown. It’s more than 50 feet above where he now stands. Around him, more than 80 boats are parked in their slips, mired in mud, with little hope they will escape soon.

Some owners have called recently to ask Weiss if their boats are stuck on the river bottom. “You’ve been in the mud for two weeks,” he tells them.

Weiss said the river typically would be about 35 feet deeper at the marina than it is now. But these days are anything but typical.

“It’s sad,” he said, “but it’s what we are dealing with.”

Portageville, Mo. — Sunset on the ‘desert’

People these days have been flocking to a spot known as the Old Ferry Landing, where the road runs out. And who could blame them? Here, where the mighty Mississippi once stretched from tree line to tree line, you can walk out a half mile or more on the ancient river bottom, now just dust and rock.

On a recent evening, families arrive in minivans to see the surreal sight. Couples walk their dogs, dodging the bony carcasses of long-dead fish. Teenagers take selfies. All of them grasp for words to describe the indescribable scene of a fierce river all but vanished.

“It’s like a desert,” said John Nelson, who came 40 miles. He and his wife were exploring long-submerged tree trunks and texting relatives photos of the spectacle. “I’m 66, and I’ve never seen it this low.”

David and Terry Finley were making their third trip from their home in Arkansas to the spot on a recent evening. Something keeps drawing them back — maybe the vast emptiness that feels so unfamiliar, or the realization they might never experience this again.

	<p>“You see it at its most powerful, and now, at its weakest,” Terry said, her arms filled with souvenirs of driftwood as the sun set purple and orange behind her.</p> <p>In the distance, other explorers were walking the arid landscape where the powerful river had once flowed. They looked like ants in the distance, against the backdrop of the sprawling riverbed.</p> <p>“It’s surreal and eerie at the same time,” Terry said. “It just makes you think how small we all are.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Iconic Northwest tree at tipping point?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/has-this-iconic-northwest-tree-reached-a-tipping-point/
GIST	<p>INDEX — Six years have passed since Bruce Albert witnessed the sudden, inexplicable death of a dozen Western red cedars on his property.</p> <p>The trees fell victim to a nameless culprit in the span of a single summer, showing no signs of a killer pest or deadly pathogen. Nearby, Douglas firs, maple, alder, black cottonwood and more than a dozen surviving red cedars remain unaffected, if not thriving, to this day.</p> <p>Albert is puzzled.</p> <p>“There’s no pattern to it,” the 70-year-old said.</p> <p>Similar symptoms have been seen among red cedars throughout the Pacific Northwest.</p> <p>For millennia, the trees have been pillars of stability and survival for the region’s forests and its inhabitants. Scaly, green-blue leaves adorned with small, oval cones hanging from drooping branches provide sustenance for elk when food is scarce during winter. The striped wood, fibrous and forgiving, protected by a soft layer of iconic red bark, wraps around a sturdy trunk that offers shelter for bears or useful material for humans.</p> <p>Diebacks have felled countless trees throughout the region but, according to emerging research, perhaps never so prominently among Western red cedars or in such noticeable concentrations west of the Cascades.</p> <p>Albert has been watching dozens of red cedars grow in his backyard since he moved to Snohomish County in 1976, back when heat waves, drought and wildfire were less common amid the region’s lush, forested corridors and abundant rain.</p> <p>Now, just beyond the next hill, the Bolt Creek fire has been burning since early September, an unnerving portent of west side fires to come as summers become increasingly severe and unpredictable.</p> <p>The ailing red cedars could be the latest victim of an influx of extreme weather events.</p> <p>Scientists, in their search for a cause, point to a changing climate, but to understand the nature and extent of the invisible threat looming over this beloved species, researchers need more time.</p> <p>The Western red cedar, or <i>Thuja plicata</i>, is the largest tree in the Pacific Northwest and one of the oldest in Western Washington.</p> <p>It is one of the most common conifers here, an evergreen, native to the Pacific Coast of North America. The species first laid its roots thousands of years ago in the rich soils of British Columbia. Tools made of red cedar found in Yuquot, a small settlement on Vancouver Island, have been dated as far back as 4,000 years.</p>

Now, it can be found in young groves and ancient forests stretching from California to Alaska.

Sam Barr, a Samish tribal citizen and a supervisor of the Stillaguamish Tribe's historic preservation office, relies on the tree for his art, spirituality and way of life.

"A lot of people refer to the cedar tree as a grandparent because it provides essential gifts that you need to survive in life," Barr said.

He has been harvesting materials from the tree for 14 years, using bark and wood to create art, tools, canoe paddles and drums inspired by traditional Coast Salish peoples.

Not only does the tree provide him with essential materials to build and carve, but it also provides a connection to his ancestors and their history.

Red cedars have been used by Indigenous communities to build homes, canoes, totem poles, rope, instruments, utensils, bowls, blankets, baskets and more. The tree's natural oils and buoyancy help make it water- and rot-resistant and therefore ideal for use in boats, rooftops and clothing.

White settlers also found the tree useful for shingles, a use that continues today, as well as for deck-building and fencing, among other things, by Northwesterners through the region.

Should the dieback worsen, it's difficult for Barr to fathom the loss of such an essential species, especially one so invaluable to the cultural heritage of First Nations, and foundational to the region's history and growth.

"When you peel the bark off the tree and put your hand on the bare trunk you can feel how alive the tree is, you can feel the fluids that flow up and down the trunk," he said. "It's almost like you can feel the tree's heartbeat."

To examine possible differences between healthy red cedars and those experiencing dieback, researchers from Washington State University, Portland State University and Reed College have collected about 30,000 cores — small, cylindrical cross-sections taken from inside the tree to examine their age and health — from 280 red cedars at 11 sites in Washington and Oregon.

Early findings suggest the dieback could be causing red cedar growth to sputter.

Scientists found the species to be growing largely in unison, regardless of previous health conditions, until about seven years ago during the early stages of a statewide dry spell.

"So they grow less and less right up until they die," said WSU researcher Henry Adams.

Something happened after 2015 that caused them to respond very differently, said his colleague and co-author Robert Andrus.

That year marked the beginning of uncommonly hot, dry weather in Washington that didn't relent until 2018.

In the past 20 years, Washington experienced seven of its 10 hottest years since 1895. Just in the past decade, the state endured a period of unprecedented heat in which soaring temperatures were bookended by an unprecedented drought in 2015 and the infamous "heat dome" of 2021.

Between each bout of extreme weather, cedars were afforded little time to recover.

Red cedars can normally survive a seasonal drought or a single heat wave. But such events in quick succession can gradually weaken a tree's ability to retain water, grow and protect itself from bugs and illness.

Red cedars are particularly sensitive to climate conditions in May and June, Adams said, because that's when they prepare themselves for the subsequent dry season.

A disruption of that cycle — like the unusually cold and wet spring weather Washington saw earlier this year — could mean the difference between life and death.

"If there's not as much moisture available during that period, then they're going to grow a lot less," Andrus said. "And they're going to shut down their growth a lot earlier."

[For years](#), climatologists have warned that global warming will destabilize the planet's natural systems, pushing them beyond a tipping point into an irreversible feedback loop that eventually leads to mass extinctions and the collapse of entire ecosystems.

In 2008, British scientist Timothy Lenton identified [nine planetary tipping points](#), including the melting or retreat of ice sheets in Greenland, the western Antarctic Ocean and East Antarctica; the collapse or disruption of oceanic currents and monsoons in and around the Atlantic, West Africa, South Asia and India; and large diebacks in the Amazon rainforest and boreal forests.

These tipping points are difficult to foresee, according to the report, as they arrive suddenly and can even trigger or "cross" with other tipping points. For the largest of Earth's natural systems, the process could take millions of years.

But smaller, localized tipping points are expected to emerge as climate change, fueled by humanity's consumption of fossil fuels, continues to worsen.

Researchers fear Western red cedars may have reached a tipping point.

"You don't know where the edge is until you've gone over it," Adams said.

If red cedars have, in fact, reached this climatic point-of-no-return, they face a dreadful prospect: a situation in which broad swaths slowly but inexorably fall victim to this dieback over the coming decades or centuries, and the species becomes extinct — or close to it, by receding into habitats on the fringe of their livable range.

The Pacific Northwest has suffered far bigger diebacks than this but almost exclusively at the hands of an aggressive bark beetle infestation, a fatal disease or deadly fungal infection.

While researchers believe the cause of the Western red cedar dieback is environmental and abiotic, or nonliving, the precise cause and mechanics of it — why the trees are responding this way, which are most vulnerable, what can be done to stop it — remain a mystery.

Perhaps the trigger is unimpeded sunlight. Perhaps it's dry soil. Perhaps it's low snowpack or too much competition. Perhaps the species is migrating north into British Columbia, as has been projected for several tree genera as the climate crisis alters their livable habitat, often pushing them into higher latitudes and higher elevations. Perhaps it's all of the above.

Each condition would require a different treatment.

Aerial surveys of tree health and species distribution have been conducted in Washington and Oregon by both states and the federal government for nearly 80 years. But it was only in 2017 that researchers began using a new label on their map: DC, short for "Dying Cedar."

The surveys show the dieback is sparsely spread across the whole region but largely concentrated in urban corridors and low elevations on the west side.

Joseph Hulbert, from WSU's Forest Health Watch, leads a project gathering data on the red cedar dieback from a network of community scientists. The project has garnered around 1,800 data points from 250 contributors, which has helped Hulbert and other researchers better understand what's happening from the ground.

In South King County's Cedar Creek Park, the wilting remains of a young red cedar stood like a distress beacon as it slowly decayed alongside thriving maples, hemlocks and firs.

Its branches were skeletal and bare, its crown colorless and its striped trunk posthumously studded with tiny holes carved by wood-boring beetles.

"This one is completely dead," said Glenn Kohler, a forest entomologist who studies insects' impact on forest health, said in August.

He touched the soft bark before removing a small patch to check underneath. The tree lived in a healthy grove surrounded by urban corridors in King County, enjoyed good access to sunlight and showed no signs of common tree killers.

The casualties are still manageable if the dieback doesn't worsen, Kohler said.

If drought is to blame, Kohler said, reducing competition by thinning the understory could help red cedars get more water. But if it's a combination of drought and heat, the solution might require a more tailored approach.

Melissa Fischer, an expert on the red cedar dieback and a forest health specialist with the state Department of Natural Resources, said red cedars undergoing dieback appeared to be more often exposed to sunlight. Trees under the canopy were more often healthier than those receiving direct sunlight.

During a drought, air bubbles drawn from parched soil can break a tree's water column, causing that part of it to wither or die. High temperatures and wind can cause a tree to become dehydrated quicker in the upper canopy.

In Western Washington and Oregon, low spring snowpack may be correlated with severe cases of the dieback.

While these clues are helpful, it's too early to draw conclusions.

"We only have hypotheses as to what's happening," Fischer said.

Timber harvesting should be done cautiously, she said, and perhaps more red cedars should be left for every acre harvested so that they have a canopy to protect them.

"The biggest question is: How do you manage for this species right now?"

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HEADLINE	10/30 Thawing permafrost exposes old pathogens
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/10/thawing-permafrost-exposes-old-pathogens-and-new-hosts/
GIST	The Arctic—that remote, largely undisturbed, 5.5 million square miles of frozen terrain—is heating up fast. In fact, it's warming nearly four times quicker than the rest of the world, with disastrous consequences for the region and its inhabitants. Many of these impacts you probably know from nature documentaries: ice caps melting, sea levels rising, and polar bears losing their homes. But good news!

There is another knock-on effect to worry about: the warming landscape is rewiring viral dynamics, with the potential to unleash new pathogens.

An underappreciated consequence of climate change is how it will exacerbate the spread of infectious disease. As the world heats up, many species are expected to up sticks and meander [many miles away](#) from their typical habitat, bringing various pathogens along with them for the ride. This means that previously unacquainted viruses and hosts will meet for the first time, potentially leading to viral spillover—where a virus jumps from one reservoir host to a new one, like our old friend SARS-CoV-2.

And a part of the world where this has a good chance of happening is the Arctic. In a [new paper](#) published in the journal the Proceedings of the Royal Society B, a group of researchers from the University of Ottawa tried to quantify the spillover risk in the region. They went to Lake Hazen, a freshwater lake in Canada located inside the Arctic Circle, and took samples of the soil and lake sediment, before sequencing the genetic material in these samples to identify what viruses were present. They also sequenced the genomes of potential hosts in the area, including animals and plants.

They then tried to gauge how likely it was that a virus might jump into a new species. To do this, they looked at the genetic history of a virus and its typical host. If a host and a virus show similar patterns in how they have evolved, it suggests that they've lived in tandem for a long time, and that the virus doesn't tend to move into other species. If their patterns of evolution are very different, it suggests the virus has spent time living in other hosts, has jumped before, and is more likely to do so again.

Knowing the propensity of viruses in the region to move species, they then used a computer algorithm to estimate how climate change would alter the likelihood of them doing so. They used the increasing flow of meltwater off nearby glaciers as a proxy for increasing temperatures, and found that as temperatures rise and glacier runoff increases, the risk of viruses in the area jumping hosts goes up with it. Why? As meltwater streams into the lake, it carries and deposits sediment, which unsettles the lake's population and, by disturbing this environment, speeds up pathogens' evolution against their hosts' immune defenses.

One important caveat is that it's not possible to give a definite answer on what will actually happen. "We're not able to say, 'We are going to have serious pandemic issues in the High Arctic,'" says Stéphane Aris-Brosou, an author on the paper and associate professor of biology at the University of Ottawa. The work is really just trying to quantify the risk of a spillover happening. "It's absolutely impossible to predict this kind of event."

Another limitation of the paper is that the researchers could only look at known virus-host relationships. "The majority are unknown," says Janet Jansson, a scientist at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Washington state who studies frozen environments and wasn't involved in the research. So you need to take the results with a pinch of salt, she says. They're indicative of the problem, but not a complete picture of the threat of viral spillover in this landscape.

Still, it's yet another example of how climate change is wreaking havoc with the microbial status quo. "We many times fail to identify the linkage that is between those outbreaks of diseases and climate change," says Camilo Mora, a data scientist at the University of Hawaii who researches how human activity affects biodiversity. In August 2022, Mora published a [review](#) in Nature Climate Change that combed through about 70,000 scientific papers, and he found that out of the 375 known infectious diseases, over half—218—will be aggravated by climate change. "We found over 1,000 different ways in which climate change can come and bite us in the ass—literally," he says.

Mora has already experienced it himself. Years ago, in his native Colombia, he was infected with chikungunya virus, a pathogen spread by mosquitoes that causes fever, joint pain, and fatigue; it was the worst pain he has ever experienced, he says. When he was working on the review, he realized that his unfortunate encounter with a mosquito was caused by flooding that had never been seen before in Colombia. "For me to discover later on that it was related to climate change was mind-blowing."

	<p>In particular, Mora and his colleagues warn that melting ice and thawing permafrost could open a Pandora's box of pathogens once frozen in time. That may sound like a dystopian sci-fi plot, but it has already happened: In the summer of 2016, a 12-year-old boy in Siberia died of anthrax after a heat wave thawed the frozen soil and revealed a reindeer carcass harboring anthrax spores that had been secretly hidden, frozen for decades. As the carcass thawed, so did the spores in its body. The outbreak went on to sicken some 90 people in the area and kill over 2,000 reindeer. Other studies have warned that thawing permafrost could also uncover antibiotic-resistant bacteria.</p> <p>But Jansson isn't too concerned about a major outbreak starting just yet. "I think that the risk is low for emerging pandemics from thawing permafrost," she says. We may have bigger fish to fry in the meantime: Climate change is already hastening the spread of insect-borne diseases. "However, you know, there's so much that we don't know."</p> <p>That's the biggest takeaway, that we don't even know what we don't know. But we shouldn't wait to find out—the rising risk of viral spillover is yet another argument for doing all we can to put the brakes on the climate crisis. Letting the world's temperatures ratchet up is a recipe for disaster, Mora says. "Whenever we go to look for something, we find something even more scary than what we knew."</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	10/31 Climate activists glue selves to dinosaur
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/10/31/germany-climate-activists-glue-dinosaur/2741667197288/
GIST	<p>Oct. 31 (UPI) -- The Natural History Museum in Berlin said criminal charges have been filed against two climate activists who glued themselves to a dinosaur display over the weekend.</p> <p>The two activists on Sunday had glued themselves to metal bars holding up the skeleton of a dinosaur, in latest climate-related protest at a public museum.</p> <p>The activists have been identified as Caris Connell, 34, and Solvig Schinkothe, 42, members of the Last Generation, which has been staging dramatic demonstrations to compel Germany to do more to curb the effects of climate change.</p> <p>The organization said in a statement that the mothers had stuck themselves to the display because "the federal government's climate course threatens the lives of all people."</p> <p>"Like the dinosaurs back then, we are threatened with climate changes that we cannot withstand," it said. "If we do not want to be threatened with extinction, we must act now."</p> <p>The museum said in a statement that the demonstration was ended by police less than an hour after it began. The display incurred damage, it said without elaborating.</p> <p>The group has taken issue with the German government's perceived lack of action to meet its goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels as set in the 2015 United Nations' Climate Agreement.</p> <p>In early fall, it had offered Berlin an ultimatum -- either introduce a 100 km/h speed limit on all German highways and introduce affordable public transport by Oct. 7 or "we will again provide maximum public disturbance."</p>

	<p>Since then, members of the Last Generation have literally taken to the streets to create traffic blockades and on Oct. 23 two activists defaced the Claude Monet painting "Grainstacks" with mashed potatoes at the Museum Barberini in Potsdam before gluing themselves to the wall.</p> <p>The organization said the protest was to force society to ask: "What is worth more, art of life?"</p> <p>The demonstrations by the Last Generation come as other activists and similar groups hold near identical protests in Europe.</p> <p>On Thursday, a member of the Just Stop Oil group attempted to glue his head to Johannes Vermeer's iconic "Girl with a Pearl Earring" painting at the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague after dousing it with a liquid.</p> <p>On Oct. 14, two Just Stop Oil activists splashed cans of tomato soup of Van Gogh's 1888 "Sunflowers" painting at London's National Gallery.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Philadelphia nightclub shooting wounds 6
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Shooting-outside-Philadelphia-nightclub-wounds-6-17545389.php
GIST	<p>PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Authorities say an early morning shooting outside a Philadelphia nightclub wounded at least six people, one of them critically.</p> <p>Police said a man opened fire shortly before 3:30 a.m. Sunday at a crowd outside Trilogy nightclub in the Northern Liberties neighborhood north of the center of the city.</p> <p>Police said a 26-year-old woman hit in the chest was taken to Jefferson Medical Center in critical condition. Two 30-year-old women and a 31-year-old woman were listed in stable condition as were a 29-year-old man and a 37-year-old man.</p> <p>Capt. John Walker told reporters that an argument that began inside the club continued outside and escalated into a fight, and one man opened fire on another man, hitting him and the other victims.</p> <p>No arrests were immediately reported. Police said a man who showed up at a hospital with a gunshot wound and an injured person spotted on gas station surveillance video may have been victims in the same incident.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Exonerated Malcom X killing; to get \$36M
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/men-exonerated-in-malcom-x-killing-to-receive-36-million/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — The city of New York is settling lawsuits filed on behalf of two men who were exonerated last year for the 1965 assassination of Malcolm X, agreeing to pay \$26 million for the wrongful convictions which led to both men spending decades behind bars.</p> <p>The state of New York will pay an additional \$10 million. David Shanies, an attorney representing the men, confirmed the settlements on Sunday.</p> <p>“Muhammad Aziz, Khalil Islam, and their families suffered because of these unjust convictions for more than 50 years,” said Shanies said in an email. “The City recognized the grave injustices done here, and I commend the sincerity and speed with which the Comptroller’s Office and the Corporation Counsel moved to resolve the lawsuits.”</p> <p>Shanies said the settlements send a message that “police and prosecutorial misconduct cause tremendous damage, and we must remain vigilant to identify and correct injustices.”</p>

Last year, a Manhattan judge dismissed the convictions of Aziz, now 84, and Islam, who died in 2009, after prosecutors said new evidence of witness intimidation and suppression of exculpatory evidence had undermined the case against the men. Then-District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. apologized for law enforcement's "serious, unacceptable violations of law and the public trust."

The New York City Law Department, through a spokesperson, said Sunday it "stands by" Vance's opinion that the men were wrongfully convicted and the financial agreement "brings some measure of justice to individuals who spent decades in prison and bore the stigma of being falsely accused of murdering an iconic figure."

Shanies said over the next few weeks the settlement documents will be signed and the New York court that handles probate matters will have to approve the settlement for Islam's estate. The total \$36 million will be divided equally between Aziz and the estate of Islam.

Aziz and Islam, who maintained their innocence from the start in the 1965 killing at Upper Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom, were paroled in the 1980s.

Malcolm X gained national prominence as the voice of the Nation of Islam, exhorting Black people to claim their civil rights "by any means necessary." His autobiography, written with Alex Haley, remains a classic work of modern American literature.

Near the end of Malcolm X's life, he split with the Black Muslim organization and, after a trip to Mecca, started speaking about the potential for racial unity. It earned him the ire of some in the Nation of Islam, who saw him as a traitor.

He was shot to death while beginning a speech Feb. 21, 1965. He was 39.

Aziz and Islam, then known as Norman 3X Butler and Thomas 15X Johnson, and a third man were convicted of murder in March 1966. They were sentenced to life in prison.

The third man, Mujahid Abdul Halim — also known as Talmadge Hayer and Thomas Hagan — admitted to shooting Malcolm X but said neither Aziz nor Islam was involved. The two offered alibis, and no physical evidence linked them to the crime. The case hinged on eyewitnesses, although there were inconsistencies in their testimony.

Attorneys for Aziz and Islam said in complaints that both Aziz and Islam were at their homes in the Bronx when Malcolm X was killed. They said Aziz spent 20 years in prison and more than 55 years living with the hardship and indignity attendant to being unjustly branded as a convicted murderer of one of the most important civil rights leaders in history.

Islam spent 22 years in prison and died still hoping to clear his name.

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HEADLINE	10/30 Fake marriage scheme organizer gets 10yrs
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/30/organizer-fraud-marriage-ring-gets-10-years-federal/
GIST	<p>The leader of a fake marriage scheme that helped people illegally become U.S. residents has been sentenced to 10 years in prison, federal prosecutors said.</p> <p>The Office of the U.S. Attorney's for the Southern District of Texas said Ashley Yen Nguyen, 58, was sentenced Thursday for conspiring to engage in marriage fraud, mail fraud, immigration fraud, money laundering and making false statements in a tax return. She pleaded guilty to the charges in November 2020.</p> <p>Prosecutors said Nguyen personally arranged at least 40 sham marriages while running the criminal organization in Southwest Houston.</p>

Vietnamese nationals would give Nguyen's organization \$50,000 to \$70,000 to marry a spouse in the U.S. to illegally obtain permanent resident status. Nguyen would then pay \$200 to the U.S. citizens, who recruited other Americans — who typically had gang associations, drug addictions or extensive criminal histories — to act as spouses.

The fraudulent spouses were promised between \$15,000 and \$20,000 in installments, although the attorney's office said that few ever came close to receiving that much money.

In total, the scheme facilitated more than 500 sham marriages and raked in \$15 million while operating across Texas and in Vietnam.

"For more than four years, this individual raked in millions by operating one of the largest marriage fraud conspiracies in U.S. history," Mark Dawson, special agent in charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Houston, said in a press release.

Mr. Dawson said that sham marriages "threatened national security by enabling individuals to remain in the country through deceit."

Nguyen admitted in her plea that the spouses didn't live together and never intended to, despite submitting documents to federal authorities suggesting otherwise. They only met once briefly, and Nguyen and other members of the criminal organization gave them information about their "relationship" to study before being interviewed by immigration officials.

The scheme went as far as preparing fake wedding albums to make it appear as if the couples had an additional ceremony outside of a courthouse.

Nguyen bought multiple residences with the money she received from the scheme. She later used those homes as staging places for the couples when authorities conducted site inspections.

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HEADLINE	10/30 FBI: criminals use rideshare to abduct kids
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/fbi-warns-of-criminals-using-rideshares-to-abduct-children
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON - The FBI is warning the public about criminals who may resort to using rideshare vehicles to abduct children, due to the less likelihood of being detected.</p> <p>Authorities said while it is a rare occurrence, they are issuing an alert due to its high impact and after receiving multiple reports. They noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, criminals believed rideshare services gave them more privacy along with mask and social distancing requirements.</p> <p>Investigators said criminals sometimes used various modes of transportation to either transport or abduct their victims during the pandemic. However, they were not apprehended while using rideshare vehicles. Instead, they were arrested while using other modes of transportation.</p> <p>The FBI also identified several examples of the crime.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In April 2022, a 16-year-old boy requested a rideshare trip from Portland, Oregon, to Rockport, Texas. During his ride, the rideshare driver offered him a drink and the boy later woke up inside of a home in Sinton, Texas, approximately 20 miles in the opposite direction of Rockport. The boy walked to a nearby home and called for help. Law enforcement later arrested the rideshare driver.• In February 2021, an adult male in Colorado met a minor victim on social media and groomed her to send child sexual exploitation material (CSAM). The male flew to California and persuaded the minor to sneak out of her residence at 2:00 a.m. to enter a rideshare vehicle. The rideshare vehicle transported them to the airport, where they boarded a plane to Washington, DC. During their travel, the adult male forced the victim to pretend to be mute and wear a wig in order to avoid detection. The victim was recovered and police apprehended her abductor at the airport during

	<p>their layover. The adult male was charged with child abduction, soliciting CSAM from a minor, and meeting the minor for sex.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In February 2022, in Mexico City, a father traveled in a rideshare vehicle with his 7-year-old son and asked the driver to stop at a flower stand. When the father exited the vehicle to make a purchase, the rideshare driver drove off with the boy. The boy found a way to call his mother and provided his location. The parents recovered the boy safely, chased, and eventually stopped the rideshare driver from escaping, where he was arrested. <p>The FBI urges people who observe suspicious behavior involving a child abduction to report it to law enforcement immediately. A complaint can also be made online.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 Same crew ramming, robbing pot shops?
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article268062072.html
GIST	<p>The method is the same each time: A stolen car slams through the entrance of a marijuana shop, shattering glass and scattering debris everywhere. A group of masked thieves rushes in, ransacks the place and flees in another stolen car.</p> <p>It's happened five times in the past week in the South Sound. The latest break-in came early Saturday at The Green Lady, a business in West Olympia.</p> <p>"They got maybe \$300 worth of stuff and did thousands of dollars of damage," said owner Mike Redman. "The stuff they grabbed wasn't even that high-level."</p> <p>Video of the Olympia incident shows the same swift smash-and-grab approach as a similar incident in Tacoma early Friday. In that case, multiple thieves exchanged gunfire with a security guard before fleeing. One suspect might have been hit, Tacoma police said.</p> <p>A third, earlier incident, previously unreported, came Oct. 23 at The Gallery, a marijuana business in the Summit area of Pierce County. Like the incidents in Tacoma and Olympia, the thieves used a stolen car to ram the entrance, and rushed inside.</p> <p>"The video showed several subjects peering in the window of the business, with their faces covered, and then the vehicle driving through the front of the business," said Pierce County Sheriff's spokesperson Darren Moss. "Once the vehicle crashed through, three subjects dressed in black clothing, possibly wearing masks and gloves, ran in and started to fill up bags with merchandise. A fourth suspect exited the vehicle that drove through the building and followed suit."</p> <p>Moss said the owner of the stolen vehicle hadn't discovered the theft at the time of the incident at The Gallery.</p> <p>Two more ramming-style break-ins occurred at Auburn marijuana shops: on Oct. 24 at the Evergreen Market and Oct. 28 at The Stash Box, said Auburn Police spokesperson Kolby Crossley. The latter incident took place on the same day as the Tacoma break-in that led to gunfire.</p> <p>"Both are the same m.o.," Crossley said. "Ram front of store, followed by several subjects on foot. Then flee in multiple vehicles."</p> <p>So far, police haven't found the suspects in any of the break-ins, but they're looking at the possibility that the same crew is involved in all five.</p> <p>"Same m.o.," said Moss.</p> <p>THE SAME CREW?</p>

Lt. Paul Lower, spokesperson for the Olympia Police Department, described similar circumstances at The Green Lady break-in. The mayhem started around 3:30 a.m.

“Video showed the vehicle crash into the front of the business,” Lower said. “What appeared to be four or five suspects rushed in, ransacked it, fled out and ran into a second vehicle.”

As in the Tacoma and Pierce County incidents, the vehicles used in The Green Lady break-in were reported stolen out of Pierce County. Lower said Olympia police relayed the information to the Thurston County Sheriff’s office Saturday morning.

Deputies spotted the vehicle fleeing north on I-5, but could not catch up to it.

“We’ve got information that this may be similar to other incidents in Pierce County,” Lower said.

Redman said Sunday that Tacoma police have asked him about the incident.

Spokesperson Wendy Haddow, asked about the similarities among the break-ins, said police are aware. “That will be part of the investigation,” she said.

While the break-ins are frightening and damaging, Redman thinks the crew of thieves isn’t too smart.

They grabbed low-level marijuana and little else. “It is kind of strange that they’re doing all that work and really not getting much out of this,” he said.

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HEADLINE	10/30 Staffing shortage hampers Pierce Co. jail
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article267959302.html
GIST	<p>A shortage of corrections deputies at Pierce County Jail has left the facility in a staffing crisis that is forcing a limit on how many inmates can be housed there. County officials are hoping newly enacted hiring incentives will attract more recruits.</p> <p>Pierce County Executive Bruce Dammeier last month signed a three-year collective bargaining agreement with the Corrections Bureau that raises hourly pay for new deputies to between \$32.38 and \$42.08. In a phone call with The News Tribune, Dammeier said he also approved sign-on bonuses of \$10,000 for new hires and \$25,000 for corrections deputies who join from other jails.</p> <p>Dammeier said the wage increases — up from between \$30.07 and \$38.96 — make corrections deputies here the highest paid in the state. Retention bonuses of \$10,000 paid over two years also were approved to help keep the deputies the jail already has.</p> <p>“We want to make sure we’re retaining our professional corrections deputies, and we want to encourage others to come,” Dammeier said. “That’s why hiring is absolutely essential right now. I’m very concerned that we’ve got to fill our vacancies, and if we don’t, our jail may not be able to provide the service that our community needs.”</p> <p>Hourly wages for entry-level corrections officers are still higher in King County, which is dealing with its own jail staffing shortage. According to its job listings, officers can earn between \$32.43 and \$43.28. Sign-on bonuses of \$7,500 to \$15,000 also are being offered.</p> <p>As a result of the staffing shortage in Pierce County, corrections deputies are putting in hundreds of hours of mandatory overtime, and it’s keeping in place restrictions that have limited jail bookings to violent offenders and misdemeanor offenses where a jail booking is mandatory, such as DUI and certain domestic-violence cases.</p> <p>Last month, the jail was down 95 corrections deputies in a facility budgeted for 262 employees, according to a Facebook post from the Sheriff’s Department, which oversees the jail. Of those 95 positions, 41 were</p>

deputies out on military, medical or family leave, while the other positions were vacant. The department projected that by the end of the year, 22 more would retire or resign.

From January to Aug. 19, the jail used 5,060 hours of mandatory overtime, acting chief of corrections Steve Jones told Pierce County Council at an August meeting. The extra hours aren't costing more than the jail is already budgeted for because the high number of vacancies is offsetting that cost, but it's straining the resources the jail does have.

"The officers are getting wore out," Jones told the council. "Most of them are over 50 and having to work 16 hours a day."

Among those who left their jobs this year, most (9) retired, according to figures Jones presented. Five went to another agency, another five moved away, two changed careers and one left corrections for patrol work in the Sheriff's Department.

Pierce County's jail's two buildings in downtown Tacoma are budgeted to hold almost 1,300 inmates, and the population Wednesday, Oct. 26, was at 811. Jail protocols have limited bookings mainly to violent offenders since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce the virus' spread, which led to steep declines in the jail's population.

Limiting bookings to violent offenders can be viewed as a step toward reducing mass incarceration. The United States has a larger portion of its population in jails and prisons than any other country in the world, according to Pew Research Center. It has also raised questions about whether booking restrictions have contributed to an increase in property crimes in Tacoma in Pierce County during the pandemic, including motor vehicle theft.

In a letter sent to local mayors and other Pierce County leaders Oct. 10, Dammeier wrote that an "unacceptably high number" of people arrested in Pierce County still weren't being booked. Beyond staffing issues, he pointed out that lengthy delays in getting inmates admitted to Western State Hospital for court-ordered competency restoration was keeping inmates at the jail who shouldn't be there.

Typically, inmates ordered to undergo competency restoration are to be admitted to Western State Hospital within 14 days of when the court order is signed. According to acting chief Jones, the lag time for admission is more like 92 days, or 38 if it's expedited.

Still, Dammeier said he's confident the increased pay and hiring incentives would be effective in getting people to join the Corrections Bureau. Sheriff's Department spokesperson Sgt. Darren Moss said Thursday that two corrections deputies had been hired in the last two months. He said they are in pre-course work that must be completed before they undergo about 18 weeks of training at the state's Criminal Justice Training Commission in Burien.

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HEADLINE	10/30 Tallahassee shootout: 1 dead, 8 wounded
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Parking-lot-shootout-in-Florida-leaves-1-dead-8-17545047.php
GIST	<p>TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — A shootout in Florida's capital city in which "dozens and dozens of shots were fired" left one dead and eight wounded, and police shot one of three suspects who were later detained, authorities said.</p> <p>Tallahassee police officers responding to reports of the shootout in the parking lots of a liquor store and restaurant Saturday night saw a man fire into a crowd and then run toward a fast-food restaurant. They followed him and eventually shot him at least three times, Tallahassee Police Chief Lawrence Revell said at a Sunday morning news conference. The suspect was not seriously wounded and was taken into custody, Revell said.</p> <p>"These officers ran toward this amazing amount of gunfire as it was occurring," Revell said. "They were rendering aid in the parking lot as it was occurring. There were dozens and dozens of shots that rang out."</p>

	<p>Police had extra patrols out Saturday night because of large crowds in town for Florida A&M University's homecoming and a Florida State home football game.</p> <p>Authorities are still investigating what led to the shootout.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/30 UK: gas bombs thrown immigration center
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/UK-police-say-gas-bombs-thrown-at-immigration-17544997.php
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — British police say one person was injured when gasoline bombs were thrown Sunday at an immigration center in the English port town of Dover.</p> <p>The Kent Police force said “two to three incendiary devices” were thrown at the facility, and “one minor injury has been reported.” The Kent Fire and Rescue Service said its crews had put out fires at the site.</p> <p>A news photographer at the scene said a man drove up and threw three gas bombs at the facility before driving to a nearby gas station and killing himself. Police said only that “the suspect has been identified and located.”</p> <p>Dover is the arrival point for many migrants who cross the English Channel from France in small boats. The number of people making the hazardous journey across one of the world's busiest shipping lanes has risen sharply in recent years, with 40,000 reaching the U.K. so far this year, up from 28,000 in all of 2021 and 8,500 in 2020.</p> <p>Dozens have died, including 27 people in November 2021 when a packed smuggling boat capsized.</p> <p>Britain and France have wrangled over how to stop the people-smuggling gangs that organize the journeys.</p> <p>Britain's Conservative government has announced a controversial plan to send people who arrive in small boats on a one-way journey to Rwanda. Critics say the plan is immoral and impractical, and it is being challenged in the courts.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Police: catalytic converter theft surges
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/catalytic-converter-theft-surges-as-precious-metals-attract-criminal-groups-11667054754
GIST	<p>Police around the country are using gumshoe detective work to break up sophisticated rings that steal catalytic converters, though many fear that they aren't making a dent in a crime wave triggered by pricey precious metals.</p> <p>Catalytic converters, cylindrical hunks of metal within the exhaust system of most cars and trucks, transform harmful gases into less-harmful ones using precious metals including rhodium, palladium and platinum. Some vehicles, such as Toyota Prius models, large pickups and delivery trucks, are often targeted by thieves because their catalytic converters contain a lot of the metals.</p> <p>Criminals use high-speed jacks and battery-operated saws to steal the devices in less than a minute, according to police.</p> <p>“They are in and out of there like a pit crew,” said Josh Gilbert, a detective with the Groveport, Ohio, police department, outside Columbus, who has helped take down two alleged rings in the past year.</p> <p>The National Insurance Crime Bureau tallied some 52,000 stolen catalytic converters in 2021, three times as high as in 2020 and a more than 10-fold increase from 2019. The devices fetch hundreds of dollars for</p>

criminals, but can cost several thousand dollars to replace, according to police. Once stolen, the devices are typically sold to scrap dealers or are taken apart and melted down in illegal smelting operations.

California, New York and Indiana are among states that have passed laws to crack down on the crime. The National Insurance Crime Bureau has helped draft a federal law introduced earlier this year that would require paperwork every time someone sells a used converter and boost criminal penalties for the sale of stolen converters.

Recyclers generally view the new laws as a good first step, said Robin Wiener, president of the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries. Ms. Wiener said her group backs a requirement that the converters be etched or marked so authorities can tell whether they have been stolen.

Auto makers say there is no evidence that etching catalytic converters would reduce theft, and it could hurt their effectiveness. They do support stricter enforcement and monitoring of the chain-of-custody, such as requiring anyone selling a converter to provide the vehicle identification number and proof of ownership, said John Bozzella, president and chief executive of the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, a lobbying group for auto makers and suppliers. New cars generally have been designed to reduce the likelihood of converter theft, making the problem more pressing for used cars.

Car owners can help curb thefts by installing protective metal cages to make them harder to steal.

Authorities are stepping up their efforts to prevent the thefts and to break up rings that steal and traffic in the devices.

The Cook County, Ill., Sheriff's Office has given local owners several opportunities to have their catalytic converters stamped with its initials—CCSO—in bright-orange lettering.

"I had no idea what the response was going to be, but holy cats, we had to shut down the online sign-up list within an hour," said Sheriff Tom Dart, adding that reported thefts in Chicago reached 4,781 through September this year, up from 1,842 during the same period last year.

Detective Gilbert, of the Groveport, Ohio, police department, sprang into action when businesses and individuals near Rickenbacker International Airport, a cargo airport and logistics hub, began reporting a high number of thefts in recent years.

Under Ohio law, individuals are allowed to sell only one converter a day, providing their driver's licenses as identification. Detective Gilbert initially thought theft rings would use several people to sell their stolen goods under different IDs. He quickly realized that Ohio's limited-liability corporations can sell as many catalytic converters as they want and that recyclers aren't required to record where items come from.

By scrutinizing patterns of behavior through crime reports, Detective Gilbert was able to catch an alleged thief who explained how the ring operated. Investigators then moved higher in the organization and in March charged a group of about six people, he said. The head of that group, who allegedly sold nearly 1,000 catalytic converters for around \$330,000, would sometimes put a tracker on trucks so he could steal a converter when a truck was parked overnight, Detective Gilbert said.

The next ring targeted in the area was even larger, Detective Gilbert said. This group allegedly stole some 13,000 catalytic converters over 14 months and sold them for a total of around \$1.4 million, he said. The alleged ring bought flatbed tow trucks and a loader to steal some 300 cars off the street, he said. The thieves would remove the catalytic converters to sell them, crush the cars with the loader and sell the scrap for another \$250,000.

He said about six people were arrested. Final charges and a potential deal between prosecutors and defense lawyers are being discussed, he said.

Detective Gilbert said he knows the fight isn't over. "I'm sure the next wave or group is going to try to tweak a few things," he said.

In Beaverton, Ore., outside Portland, police broke up a multistate ring that allegedly processed some 44,000 catalytic converters and sold them for around \$22 million, said Detective Patrick McNair of the Beaverton police department.

Detective McNair said he built the case starting with low-level thieves and then moved up the food chain to the person who bought the stolen converters and then to yet another buyer. "He was boxing them up and shipping them off—sometimes a full semi-truck at a time," Detective McNair said.

In August, more than a dozen people were charged in the case, and other local and federal agencies are investigating, he said. The cases are still making their way through the courts.

Lynn Christian, a 66-year-old retired gardener from Mosier, Ore., said her 2004 Toyota Prius sounded like a big motorcycle when she prepared to drive home from a concert earlier this month in Gresham, on the other side of Portland from Beaverton.

"I was hoping it was another car at first, but then I could feel the vibrations underneath me," she said.

She got her car back about 10 days later with a repair bill of around \$1,800, of which insurance paid \$1,300 and she paid \$500.

"I'm having a cover put over it to deter future thefts" for an extra \$375, she said, adding that she wishes she could rig her hybrid car's battery to zap any future would-be thieves.

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HEADLINE	10/30 Haiti ambassador appeals for intervention
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/30/haiti-ambassador-usa-criminal-gangs
GIST	<p>The Haitian ambassador to Washington has appealed to the international community to accelerate talks on deploying an armed intervention, warning that criminal gangs were in danger of taking over the country.</p> <p>Bocchit Edmond made his appeal as efforts to agree to a UN resolution backing such a force appear to have stalled, and as the US and Canada have been holding urgent talks looking for ways to break the impasse.</p> <p>"It is important to see how we can go fast and make sure that we take those armed gangs out of business, because if we don't do that urgently, it's a matter of time for them to take over the entire country," Edmond told the Guardian.</p> <p>"It is not going to be in the interests of all our closest neighbors if we allow such a thing to happen."</p> <p>Heavily armed gangs have blocked off Haiti's main fuel terminal, bringing much of the country to a halt and triggering the collapse of basic services, amid a cholera outbreak and widespread hunger. The UN has said 96,000 Haitians have been forced to flee their homes to escape the violence.</p> <p>The UN security council agreed to a resolution earlier this month to sanction gang leaders but there was no consensus on giving a green light to a non-UN force to be recruited from willing nations aimed at helping the outgunned Haitian police break the gangs' stranglehold.</p> <p>The US has said it remains hopeful that the council would eventually pass a resolution giving UN blessing to a force, and the secretary of state, Antony Blinken, visited Ottawa for talks with his Canadian counterpart and the country's prime minister, Justin Trudeau.</p>

Canada sent a fact-finding team to Haiti to assess the humanitarian and security needs, but Trudeau was noncommittal, saying on Friday: “Before we establish any sort of mission, we need to see a clear plan of action.”

Ned Price, the state department spokesman, said that intensive diplomatic work at the UN and outside would continue.

“The resolution that’s being discussed needs to be limited, carefully scoped. We’ve made clear it would be a non-UN mission led by a partner country, with deep and necessary experience required for any such effort to be effective,” Price said on Friday. “A number of countries around the world are working with us on this ... This is a work in progress, but we are absolutely working on it.”

There is [widespread apprehension that such an intervention could mire the countries sending troops in a protracted struggle](#) with no clear exit, as had happened with previous UN forces.

Haitian activists have also warned that intervention could exacerbate the violence without offering a long-term solution. Peacekeepers deployed after a devastating 2010 earthquake were accused of [systematic sexual abuse](#) of Haitian women, and introduced a cholera outbreak which killed 10,000 and took nine years to eradicate.

Edmond, the Haitian ambassador, said a method would need to be found to get around those hurdles.

“I understand that there have been mistakes and I’m sure that we have learned from them, and we can see how we can do things differently,” Edmond said. “But the only thing I will say is: just look at the situation in Haiti, because you have a population that is defenseless in front of armed gangs, who have firepower far superior to the national police.

“There are 4 million kids who cannot go to school. All the elderly who need care at [a] hospital cannot get access to hospital, and now you have an outbreak of cholera. The companies that make potable water cannot work because the main fuel terminal is blocked. So it is the exact recipe for very apocalyptic ends,” the ambassador said. “Just look at this scenery and make your own judgment, if the Haitian people do not deserve to live like your people.”

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HEADLINE	10/29 Louisiana juvenile detention abuses, chaos
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/10/29/us/juvenile-detention-abuses-louisiana.html
GIST	<p>COUSHATTA, La. — The last time Bridget Peterson saw her son Solan was through the window of a holding cell at Ware Youth Center, just two weeks after his 13th birthday. Even for such a small boy — a shade over five feet tall, barely 90 pounds — the cell looked cramped.</p> <p>Four days later, he was dead by suicide. “I remember screaming, ‘My boy is gone,’” Mrs. Peterson said.</p> <p>She soon learned that another child at Ware had killed himself two days before. Then she learned that her son had been isolated in that bare cell for at least four days, even though state rules said he shouldn’t have spent a single night there. The guards, who were supposed to check on him every 15 minutes, hadn’t done so for more than two hours, just as they had neglected to check on the other boy, state regulators’ records and surveillance footage show.</p> <p>“It’s like, what on earth is going on?” she said.</p> <p>For a few days in February 2019, the back-to-back suicides flashed across the news cycle around northwest Louisiana. But inside the walls at Ware, one of the state’s largest juvenile detention facilities, children have been trying to kill themselves with stunning regularity.</p>

There were at least 64 suicide attempts at Ware in 2019 and 2020, a rate higher than at any other juvenile facility in the state. Children have tied socks, towels and sheets around their necks. They have swallowed baby powder, screws, fluid from an ice pack. Two tried to drown themselves.

Escape attempts are surging, too: At least 91 children have tried to flee since the beginning of 2019, a little more than 5 percent of those held at Ware in that period. In June 2020, a girl told staff members that she was going to run away in hopes that the police would take her to “the big jail” rather than back to Ware, records show. A second told staff members at Ware that she would rather be sent to a psychiatric hospital than spend another day there. Soon after, she tried to kill herself by leaping from a roof.

Behind any attempt at suicide lies a tangle of factors. But what has happened at Ware has brought into sharp focus pervasive despair among children there that no one is going to rescue them from repeated acts of physical violence, sexual assault and psychological torment, an investigation by The New York Times and the Investigative Reporting Program at the University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism found.

For years, Ware’s leaders have failed to report complaints of abuse, hired unqualified employees and disregarded state rules. Records offer no evidence that state regulators have ever fined or punished Ware, or threatened its contracts, even as inspectors have documented the same failings year after year. Local law-enforcement officials have been largely dismissive of sexual-abuse allegations at Ware.

The Times/Berkeley investigation — based on more than 100 interviews with people previously held at Ware and current and former staff members, thousands of pages of records and court documents, and hours of security footage — reveals how a place meant to offer children care and rehabilitation instead descended into chaos and cruelty. Guards beat and choked their wards. Several forced children to endure sexual abuse as the price for phone privileges. They frequently maintained control by bribing children with food to assault other children.

“I used to tell myself I’m not going to ever get through this stuff,” Asia Perkins, the girl who threw herself off the roof, said in an interview.

In interviews and documents, 42 people held at Ware over the last 25 years described being sexually abused by staff members. Many accounts were corroborated by relatives, others once held at Ware or court records. In all, they identified 30 staff members who had sexually abused children at Ware; one of the accused, a longtime manager, still works there. Yet many said they had remained silent at the time, out of fear of retaliation or the understanding that others’ complaints had been simply brushed aside.

“Basically, you can’t do nothing, you can’t go tell on them,” said Shakira Williams, who spent about a year and a half at Ware.

Ware declined to comment for this article.

The center may be extreme in some respects, but it embodies the chronic dysfunctions of America’s juvenile justice systems, their stubborn resistance to decades of exposés and waves of reform. In Louisiana, where brutal conditions prompted juvenile justice reform two decades ago, the system is again in crisis. Amid chronic staffing shortages, a succession of headline-grabbing uprisings and escapes is being met with measures once banned, such as arming some guards with Tasers.

Ware, in Red River Parish, is also emblematic of the systems’ pervasive racial imbalances. Roughly three-quarters of the children held there are Black, many from urban areas hours away from this part of the state, which violently opposed Reconstruction and fought school desegregation into the late 1970s. Most Ware guards are Black, as well, though nearly all of its leaders are white, as are the local judge, sheriff and district attorney.

Yet central to the story of Ware are the politics and protocols of this patch of northwest Louisiana forest and bayou, where a handful of influential men harnessed their power to direct millions of state dollars to

the construction and nurturing of what is now a major regional employer, while insulating it from outside intervention. “They had their political ducks in a row,” said Mary Livers, who until 2016 ran the state’s Office of Juvenile Justice. “It was pretty well protected.”

At the same time, allegations of abuse at Ware have frequently received superficial scrutiny from the local criminal-justice system. Year after year, records and interviews show, the sheriff’s office conducted cursory investigations, sometimes failing to interview key witnesses or rejecting out of hand allegations from children they viewed as incorrigible criminals. Julie Jones, who has prosecuted three Ware guards for sexual abuse in her 13 years as district attorney, offered each of them plea bargains that kept them out of prison and off sex-offender registries.

“I do not like the idea of burdening someone with a charge that they do not deserve,” Ms. Jones said in an interview.

Asked if those cases gave her concerns about the safety of children at Ware, she responded: “We’re talking about armed robbers and murderers. And these girls haven’t even hit the age of 18 yet, some of them. Do I worry about their safety? No, I don’t. I think that they’re quite capable of taking care of themselves.”

In fact, while some of the children at Ware are held for violent crimes, a vast majority are girls and boys like Solan Peterson, sent there for nonviolent offenses or infractions as minor as skipping school. “We knew there would be consequences,” his mother said, “but my kid didn’t deserve to die because he set fire to a roll of toilet paper in a school.”

LAST LINE OF DEFENSE

On Thursday nights in the late 1980s, some of the most powerful men in northwest Louisiana — judges, sheriffs’ deputies and politicians from seven neighboring parishes — began meeting at the Catfish Bend restaurant south of town to discuss a shared problem: where to send local children who broke the law.

Some of Louisiana’s larger parishes had their own juvenile detention centers. But in small parishes like Red River, officials had to hope they could snag empty beds — at considerable expense — at a center in, say, Lafayette or Baton Rouge, several hours away.

One Catfish Bend participant was Donald Kelly, a close confidant of Gov. Edwin Edwards. As the Democratic floor leader in the State Senate, Mr. Kelly wielded significant influence over the state budget; now he would use it to secure funding for a juvenile facility serving all seven parishes. Red River is one of Louisiana’s least populous parishes, but Mr. Kelly said in an interview that he worked to have the new center built there, in the place where he grew up and where his former law partner was the judge.

The center would be named for that judge, Richard Ware. Its director would be Kenny Loftin, a 29-year-old child-abuse investigator recommended by Mr. Kelly and voted in by Ware’s founders. As one Catfish Bend participant put it, Mr. Loftin was “Donnie’s guy.”

Ware opened in 1993, at a time when Louisiana was earning a reputation for operating one of the country’s worst juvenile systems. A series of scandals led to the closing of all privately run juvenile facilities, and in 2000, the federal government assumed oversight of those run by the state.

But Ware was neither private nor state-run. It was a “political subdivision” of the state, created by legislation and overseen by a board composed of many of the men who met at Catfish Bend. This structure offered them and their charismatic new director ready access to tax dollars and far more independence from regulators.

Ware began to grow. In addition to the detention center, for children arrested and awaiting disposition of their cases, it added group homes for children with substance abuse and behavioral problems. And with Mr. Loftin working his political connections, Ware won a no-bid contract to house every girl in Louisiana sentenced to secure care — the state’s most restrictive form of detention for children convicted of crimes — along with \$5 million to build new girls’ dormitories.

One of the first to arrive would be Shakira Williams. On Sept. 30, 2009, nearly 300 miles to the south, Shakira woke up at Florida Parishes Juvenile Detention Center expecting a routine Wednesday. Instead, she recalls, she and about a dozen other girls were shackled and loaded into a van headed for Ware.

Shakira, 16 at the time, had entered the juvenile system the year before. Her mother struggling with addiction, Shakira had turned to theft to support her siblings. “I was the oldest, and I had to step up. Or I thought I had to,” she said in an interview. She got caught and was put in a group home. When she was arrested again — for possessing an acquaintance’s gun — she was sentenced to secure care at Florida Parishes.

There the program was tailored to girls, many of whom had histories of sexual abuse or pregnancy. Florida Parishes is just an hour from New Orleans and Baton Rouge, where most of the girls were from. “We were doing good work with girls,” Joseph Dominick, an administrator at Florida Parishes, said. “Why send them so far up north?”

Shakira was struck by the “straight cotton fields” as the van drew closer to Ware, she recalls. “There were a lot of things that would upset an African-American kid,” she said.

At Ware — the detention center, school and several group homes surrounded by 125 acres of forest — Shakira found a place that seemed to view her as irredeemable. Training materials in use since at least 2014 teach employees that “society” expects them to serve “as their last line of defense in protecting their community from those deemed unfit to live among them.”

At Florida Parishes, days had been carefully structured with school and therapy; misbehavior was met with five-minute timeouts. But with Ware’s new girls’ dormitories still unfinished, Shakira said, she was placed in a cell and put on “23 and 1” — 23 hours a day locked up, with one hour out to shower. She and other girls said they were kept on lockdown until the new housing was ready.

Eleanor Morgan, a former supervisor with decades of experience in other juvenile facilities, said she had never seen lockdown used as much as at Ware. Experts have long known that prolonged isolation is harmful to children’s neurological development. In 2013, the state limited lockdown to 72 hours. But Ware continued confining children for far longer, five people held at Ware said. One said she had been kept on lockdown for two months.

What made lockdown worse, several said, were psychiatric drugs — common in juvenile facilities — that left them feeling like “zombies.” Forced to take Seroquel and Prozac but fearing their effects, Shakira would hide the pills under her tongue and stow them under her mattress, she said.

“I don’t know how they function with the amount of medications some of them were on,” said Janice McCanliss, who worked at Ware until 2019.

Ware’s policies prohibit “the inflicting of physical pain on a youth for punishment.” But a majority of those interviewed for this article who had been held at Ware or worked there said guards routinely punished, degraded or inflicted pain.

One favored takedown, they said, was “chicken wings”: Guards would cross your arms behind your back, then force them up until it seemed that your shoulders would pop out of their sockets. Patricia Bell, who still works at Ware, said in an interview in 2020 that the technique had been part of the training until 2018. “Now you aren’t supposed to do the chicken wing,” she said. “Of course, they still do.” In reports to the state, Ware’s nurses described carpet burns on children’s faces and head-to-toe bruises from restraints.

For Shakira, the abuse didn’t let up once she moved into Ware’s new dormitories. She was no longer locked up all day, but she and others once held at Ware overwhelmingly recalled a staff who tormented them. “They would say my mom didn’t want me for nothing but a disability check,” said Dayja Nixon, incarcerated at Ware in 2017 and 2018. Six women said staff members had withheld sanitary pads as

punishment. One recalled a white supervisor who treated Black children differently. “I frightened her; she called me an N-word,” she said.

Shakira’s dorm supervisor, Tynica Haskett, inspired singular fear. Nine women once held at Ware said she would often painfully restrain and beat children. “It was like a drill,” said one former co-worker, Tracy Mosley. “She would go into the rooms on a rampage and flip the mattresses, take the kids down.”

Ms. Haskett, who no longer works at Ware, declined to comment.

Sometimes guards bribed children to beat up other children. “They’d give us a sign” by gesturing toward the designated target, Shakira said. “Then, they’d take your order for shrimp or chicken.”

She remembered being constantly hungry, and said that when a female guard came into her room and kissed her, she went along, enduring sexual abuse for weeks in exchange for food. “You’ve got to survive,” she said.

Not all employees were abusive. Samyra Williams, held at Ware until 2020, recalled that she grew close to her unit’s residential adviser; she called her “the mother that most children wish they had.”

But even the best intentions were challenged by Ware’s culture. Precious Sellers said she hoped to be a role model when she started as a guard in 2019. “That was knocked out of me the first time I went into Ware,” she said. She quit after a month.

‘YOU DON’T HAVE A CHOICE’

In separate interviews, 29 people held at Ware over the past 25 years said they had endured sexual abuse by staff members. Incident reports and lawsuits reveal allegations from 13 more.

They described a range of abuses, from suggestive comments and lewd gestures to rape. One girl said baring her breasts was quid pro quo for access to library books. Another said a guard forced her to take photos on his cellphone of her touching her genitals. A third said she was 13 when a guard raped her. The next time he tried she fought back, only to be sprayed with Mace. The time after that, she said, she stopped resisting. Boys were abused, too. This past April, a female guard was captured on surveillance video orally raping a boy.

In some cases, guards continued to harass those held at Ware after they left. “U can b my boo n I’ll be ur little secret,” one wrote to a 17-year-old on Facebook five months after her release.

Yet former residents and employees, in interviews, said Ware’s leaders were largely indifferent, even apathetic, in the face of abuse allegations.

In separate interviews, four women said a supervisor named Mallory Parson II had raped them. Another said he would enter her cell and strip-search her. Three others said he had sexually harassed them. Shakira Williams recalled his boasting about sexually assaulting girls — he called it “breathing.” He would say, “I need everyone to go to sleep so I can go breathe,” she said.

In an interview, Mr. Parson, who left Ware in 2013, described his accusers as criminals “from the streets” who should not be believed. “I never had intercourse with any of them girls,” he said. “We can’t do that. Too many people, too many cameras.”

But the eight women who described Mr. Parson’s conduct said it typically took place in the surveillance system’s blind spots — the nurses’ bathroom, the laundry room, the holding cells. Indeed, records show that abuse has been happening in those places for years.

Gabryell Hardy, sent to Ware in 2009 at 14, was often locked in a holding cell where she came face to face with Mr. Parson. Isolated in the cell, she said, her heart would pound at the sound of jingling keys. She

would cross her legs as Mr. Parson came in and sat next to her on the concrete bed. “His breath would stink, he would be so close,” she said. She would push him off, but he would not stop.

“Sometimes you just let him touch you, you just let him, because you don’t have a choice,” she explained. Reporting him seemed futile, because his conduct was an open secret. “That’s their house,” she said. “Whatever they say goes.”

She considered hanging herself. “This is your life,” Ms. Hardy, now 27, recalls thinking. “This is it.”

Two women who said they had been sexually assaulted by Mr. Parson recalled reporting it to Ware’s administrators. Three employees — a guard, a supervisor and a teacher — said in interviews that they, too, had reported Mr. Parson for inappropriate sexual conduct. None of the five recalled any kind of investigation in response to their allegations, which came between 2005 and 2011.

It is unclear how Ware’s administrators responded to these complaints, if at all. Ware declined to produce records of abuse complaints against its employees. However, Mr. Parson said he had once been suspended while the sheriff’s office investigated a sexual-abuse allegation against him. The inquiry ended in a matter of days, he said, adding that he had never been questioned. There is no record of him being charged.

Among the 30 staff members accused of sexual abuse at Ware — in incident reports that Ware submitted to the state, as well as court files and interviews — was the detention center’s longtime manager, Raymond Lloyd Jr., an imposing man in his 50s who has worked there since it opened. Two women said Mr. Lloyd had groped them; one of them said he had stuck his fingers in her vagina. Four more described physical abuse.

Doreisha Martin, incarcerated at Ware more than a decade ago, remembered Mr. Lloyd entering the room as she was being restrained by several staff members. “He actually spat in my face,” she said. He pulled her head back by her hair and then, “Mr. Raymond, he choked me unconscious.”

All these years later, she says she still can’t bear to have anyone behind her.

In May 2021, another child told her probation officer that Mr. Lloyd had choked her, an incident report shows. She is one of 15 children who described being choked by Ware employees. That same month, documents show, a third child confided to her probation officer that Mr. Lloyd had told her “he could touch her with one finger and make her melt.”

There is no evidence that any outside regulator looked into the accusations against Mr. Lloyd, who continues to work at Ware.

The Department of Children and Family Services said the May 2021 allegations had been investigated by the local sheriff’s office — which, for its part, said neither accusation had even been reported. “Apparently this was an unfounded complaint investigated in-house,” Suzanne Gallier, chief of criminal investigations and narcotics for the Red River Parish Sheriff’s Office, wrote on an incident report for both allegations. In an email, she said that the Office of Juvenile Justice had also assigned an investigator. But the general counsel for that agency said it would not have had jurisdiction to investigate.

The sheriff’s office would not provide The Times with records of investigations into Ware employees. But Captain Gallier expressed skepticism about the children’s allegations. “You can’t believe what these kids say,” she said, adding, “These kids come from all over the place, from down south, New Orleans, Baton Rouge. They’re different, they’re a lot rougher.”

As the detention center’s manager, Mr. Lloyd was supposed to receive reports of sexual abuse. But former staff members and people once held in the facility described his response as often grudging or dismissive. Mary Ann Wiggins, who taught at Ware for 14 years, said that when a student confided that Mr. Parson had assaulted her, she typed up a report and hand-delivered it to Mr. Lloyd. “I don’t think Raymond appreciated that I believed the girl,” she said.

Former employees said they perceived a culture of “picks and chooses” that protected those with the right local connections, like Mr. Parson, whose father was a longtime Coushatta councilman. At least six of Mr. Lloyd’s relatives have worked at Ware. Ms. Morgan, the former supervisor, had one of his nephews on her shift; she feared retaliation if she reported him for even the smallest infraction.

“Coushatta look out for Coushatta people,” she explained.

Mr. Lloyd declined to comment.

MALFEASANCE IN OFFICE

In 1997, David Adkins, a Red River Parish sheriff’s deputy, learned that a Ware supervisor, Ronald Peace, had been sexually assaulting a 15-year-old girl in the laundry room.

Like pretty much everyone who would be involved in the case, Mr. Adkins was quite familiar with Ware. He was one of its founders and remained a board member.

Ware’s assistant director, Joey Cox, took the victim’s statement. Ware’s director, Mr. Loftin, was permitted to weigh in on what charges to bring.

The judge was another board member, Lewis Sams, and after Mr. Peace’s conviction, he sentenced him to three years in prison. “Ron will be out in one to one and a half years max,” Mr. Adkins wrote in his journal after the sentencing, adding, “It doesn’t help to try to keep kids from being sexually abused in Red River Parish.” In an interview, Mr. Sams said that he had informed Mr. Peace’s lawyer that he was on the board, and that he had later stepped down to avoid possible conflicts. He declined to comment on the sentence.

The case would become emblematic of Red River Parish’s handling of allegations of abuse at Ware. In fact, of the four guards convicted of sexually assaulting children at Ware, Mr. Peace would be the only one imprisoned. In interviews with former deputies who investigated abuse allegations at Ware, and in records from their investigations, a portrait of indifference emerges. The sheriff’s office deferred to Ware officials like Mr. Lloyd on what video evidence was relevant. Witnesses were interviewed perfunctorily, if at all. Even the children reporting the abuse were not always interviewed.

“If there wasn’t video or an eyewitness, there wasn’t a lot we could do,” said Johnny Taylor, a former sheriff’s detective. “Most of the girls in there, it’s hard to believe what they say. They’re not in there for going to church on Sunday.”

One case he investigated involved 15-year-old Natalee Brannon. In January 2014, Natalee was sent to Ware after fighting with her mother, who had called the police hoping it would scare her into better behavior. When she came home two days later, she went straight to the shower. “She’s showering over and over and over and over and crying, and I’m just thinking, ‘God, why did I put her there?’” said her mother, Jennifer Denman.

Worried, Ms. Denman took her daughter to the hospital, where a nurse told her Natalee needed rape counseling.

That same week, another 15-year-old reported that a Ware supervisor, Christopher Morris, had repeatedly raped her. The detective reviewed video, provided by Ware, that showed Mr. Morris entering a bathroom with the girl, something male guards were forbidden to do. Mr. Taylor soon discovered that Mr. Morris had been alone in the bathroom with a second girl. When he learned of Natalee’s hospital visit, he suspected she might be a third.

Natalee was not ready to talk. (She would later say Mr. Morris had threatened her mother’s life if she spoke.)

There is no evidence that Mr. Taylor looked into whether Mr. Morris's behavior extended beyond that week or if there were any other victims. Two of Mr. Morris's colleagues said they were never interviewed, including a guard who took the original complaint against him, and another who remembered his repeatedly taking "private phone calls" in the bathroom. Still, Mr. Taylor believed he had enough evidence to put Mr. Morris away for decades.

Instead, prosecutors offered Mr. Morris two years' probation, without inclusion in the sex-offender registry, if he pleaded guilty to four counts of "malfeasance in office for sexual conduct" — a charge Louisiana prosecutors often use against prison guards accused of illicit sexual relationships.

The outcome surprised Mr. Taylor. "With someone not from here, you throw the book at them," the detective said. (Mr. Morris declined to comment.)

Ms. Jones, the district attorney since 2009, said in an interview that in negotiating the plea, she had, among other things, looked to previous cases against Ware employees. Five years earlier, she had negotiated pleas with two other guards, the cousins Chiquita and Laquinta Ware, who were accused of sexually abusing two girls. (One was Shakira Williams.) They pleaded guilty to malfeasance in office and served probation.

"I try, whether it be right or wrong, for first offenders to give them a probationary period, unless there's an aggravated crime," Ms. Jones said.

She would not elaborate on why there were no aggravating factors in the cases of sexual assault by Ware guards on incarcerated children.

"What I like to do is to say, 'Here is your opportunity to do different.'"

DOG AND PONY SHOW

Two state agencies oversee Louisiana's juvenile system, and each has had ample opportunity to intervene at Ware.

The Office of Juvenile Justice, which provides much of Ware's funding, assesses the effectiveness of therapeutic programs and investigates sexual-abuse allegations. The Department of Children and Family Services licenses Ware and is charged with ensuring compliance with state standards. Ware is legally required to notify both of serious incidents of abuse, and both have broad investigative authority.

They can also issue fines or revoke contracts and licenses. Neither agency has taken these steps against Ware. In fact, in audits dating back to 2012, the Office of Juvenile Justice has awarded Ware ratings of "effective," "highly effective" and in "full compliance."

Records and interviews offer evidence that state oversight is frequently superficial and easy to manipulate. Inspectors fail to uncover serious problems at Ware, and when they do identify shortcomings — often the same ones over and over — state officials rarely enforce demands for change.

From 2012 to 2019, for example, the Office of Juvenile Justice repeatedly found that Ware's therapy programs for girls were delivered by untrained staff members, with little regard for girls' individual needs. Each time, the agency reiterated its recommended improvements, yet as of last year, Ware's counseling was still rated "noncompliant" with state standards. The agency declined to comment for this article.

Children and Family Services, meanwhile, has consistently found "deficiencies," such as failing to disburse medication correctly or do timely mental-health evaluations. Each time, Ware has submitted a plan to address the issue; in many cases, inspectors have returned to find the same problems.

Glenn Holt, a former assistant secretary of the Office of Juvenile Justice, recalled Mr. Loftin saying that state oversight was "a waste of time."

“He’d make comments like, ‘If at any given point I don’t want to play with these guys, I’m not worried,’” Mr. Holt said. “‘Cause if I shut my doors, I guarantee you got sheriffs, you got local law enforcement, you got people, judges that are going to be screaming at D.C.F.S., ‘What the hell are you doing? You’re jeopardizing public safety.’”

When auditors showed up at Ware, Mr. Holt said, the director stage-managed “a dog and pony show.” Mr. Loftin, he said, would give a “big ol’ country boy smile,” and ask, “What can we do for you girls?”

Before inspections, there was a “mad rush to fix everything,” said Janice McCanliss, the former Ware guard. Children had their hair done. New bedding and rugs suddenly appeared. Inspectors often relied on Ware officials to choose which children would be interviewed, current and former staff members said.

“They pick someone who is scared,” said Kaley Breaux, held at Ware in 2014 and 2015. “I was that one.”

Dr. Livers, the former juvenile justice secretary, described Mr. Loftin this way: “He thought he was the smartest, most excellent juvenile justice professional in the state of Louisiana. Who the hell has the audacity to tell him how to do anything?”

When Mr. Loftin retired and ran for sheriff in 2015, he was succeeded by his longtime deputy, Mr. Cox. Ware’s relationship to regulators, though, remained consistent. Ware is required by federal law, for example, to submit annual reports documenting all allegations of sexual abuse. In 2014, the year Christopher Morris was accused of sexually assaulting three girls, Ware reported no allegations of sexual abuse by detention center employees. It again reported none in 2018, when another guard was accused of sexually abusing a 16-year-old boy.

Mr. Loftin and Mr. Cox declined to comment.

Regulators had evidence that Ware was being less than candid in reporting “critical incidents.” Between 2017 and 2020, inspectors cited Ware nine times for failing to promptly and accurately report encounters between staff members and children that involved restraints or force. In a 10th incident, Ware reported that a guard had subdued a 13-year-old girl “with her hand in [the child’s] neck area.” Video footage, however, showed something different: The guard had choked the girl for 14 seconds, an investigator for the Department of Children and Family Services found.

The agency cited Ware for a single “deficiency,” then closed its investigation.

In a written statement, the agency said it had limited authority to issue fines or demand personnel changes. When conducting facility inspections, the agency added, its licensing staff — not Ware administrators — chooses whom to interview. The agency would not say whether it had ever considered revoking Ware’s licenses. “The department works with providers to implement corrective measures designed to alleviate cited deficiencies in order to maintain the providers’ licenses,” the statement said.

Meanwhile, at the Red River Parish Sheriff’s Office, an investigator reviewed the video of the choking incident and cleared Ware’s staff of wrongdoing “due to the juvenile’s size and level of aggression.”

‘ONE OF THE SAFEST’

Alora Fountain had been crying all day.

It was March 7, 2017, and a guard had been taunting her that her grandmother didn’t want her anymore, said her friend Keelye Denise. That day, Alora, 16, confided to a counselor that she had begun making herself throw up, and she told her friend that she wondered if her mother would miss her if she were gone.

At around 8 p.m., she wrapped a sheet around her neck. “All you see was her hanging,” Ms. Denise said.

Alora’s death was a prelude to a rising tide of suicide attempts, runaway attempts and general dysfunction that converged the second week of February in 2019.

Jordan Bachman, a 17-year-old from Colorado, had arrived at Ware six weeks earlier, charged with disturbing the peace and resisting arrest while on a road trip with friends in Louisiana.

His mother, Patricia Bachman, drove to Ware to see him. He seemed uncharacteristically sad and subdued, she recalled.

On Thursday, Feb. 7, he was put in his cell after fighting in school, Lawrence Chisolm II, a classmate, said. Before the fight, he had written these words on a piece of paper: “dying inside.”

The shift supervisor that night was Travis Howard, who in the past had been disciplined for failing to report using force on a child; Ware’s leaders had promised regulators that he would be monitored to “ensure appropriate interactions with juveniles.”

It is not known what time Jordan hanged himself. He was found at 11:45 p.m. To this day, Ms. Bachman can hear the coroner’s voice, waking her with the news.

The next morning, Ware’s assistant director, Staci Scott, reported to state regulators that she and Mr. Lloyd had reviewed video, and that room checks had been conducted every 15 minutes as required.

Those assurances were false. When state officials reviewed the footage, they saw that no one had checked on Jordan between 10 and 11:45. They also discovered that guards had falsified the room-check log.

Mr. Howard, the shift supervisor, said in an interview that it hadn’t been his responsibility to check on Jordan. He denied the earlier allegation of assault.

Solan Peterson was at Ware that night — at 13, one of the youngest and smallest children there. Others saw him as the exasperating little brother who never stopped talking, never stopped fidgeting. “We would tell him, ‘Chill out, man, chill out. You just tripping,’” Mr. Chisolm recalled.

Solan certainly had his mental-health struggles — attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and anxiety, as well as trauma from his early childhood, before he was adopted. But he had never been in legal trouble until the week before, when he lit a roll of toilet paper on fire at school — the police found birthday candles and a lighter — and was sent to Ware. “I was assured that that’s one of the safest facilities around,” his mother said.

Several days later, Solan, a boy who loved to tinker and take things apart, disassembled the light in his cell and picked the lock on the door. When he was caught, he was placed in isolation.

Mental-health professionals would likely have warned that putting a child with Solan’s psychological profile in isolation would be a special torment. By then, he should have had a full mental-health assessment. But that didn’t come until three days later, Feb. 8. According to an incident report filed after his death, the social worker who met with him said Solan had been “curious” about Jordan’s suicide but “did not voice any suicidal ideations” and had been “joking and in a good mood.”

At one point — it is not clear exactly when — Cora Sepulvado, a 15-year-old tasked with cleaning the area, overheard Solan in tears, pleading for help and telling a guard that he wanted to die. The guard, she said, “told the boy, ‘If you want to be killing yourself, just do it, because people just be saying that.’”

Under state rules, isolation should not exceed four hours. By Saturday, Feb. 9, Solan had been in isolation for four days.

Though Jordan had died two nights earlier, guards once again skipped the required 15-minute checks. Video shows the shift supervisor, Jhanquial Smith, checking on Solan at 9:13. Then, for more than an hour, nothing. At 10:45, Travis Howard, once again on duty, walked by without checking, records show.

At 11:30, Mr. Smith finally looked in on Solan. He had hanged himself.

Another guard dropped to his knees and sobbed. A distraught boy pounded the walls of his cell. In the background, the YNW Melly song “Murder on My Mind” played from a speaker.

The suicides touched off the usual round of regulatory inquiries. Investigators cited Ware for improper supervision, the seventh time in just over three years. For the third time, the state found a failure to do timely mental-health assessments. Also for the third time, it found that Ware was keeping children in holding cells too long.

But as with all the other citations, these carried no financial penalty or other actions against Ware’s license or leadership. Questioned about the suicides at a public meeting, a senior official with the Office of Juvenile Justice said the state’s investigation “didn’t find concerns.”

Five months after the suicides, the agency awarded Ware a new \$450,000 contract — to supervise at-risk youth.

In September 2020, the district attorney brought malfeasance-in-office charges against Mr. Smith and another guard for failing to check on Solan. Mr. Smith is awaiting trial; the other guard has since died.

Ms. Jones said she “did not believe that criminal charges were warranted” in Jordan’s death, despite the video showing that guards had failed to check on him, too. She declined to elaborate.

Ware’s administrators introduced changes, including a system to enforce room checks. Yet children continued to be at risk.

On Christmas Eve 2019, a guard was arrested on charges of battering a child at Ware. In 2020, a guard was arrested on charges of helping children slip out at night to go on burglary sprees. In 2021, a guard was arrested on charges of taking a bribe to help a child escape. This past May, a guard was arrested on charges of sexually assaulting a boy in the laundry room and then helping him and two other boys escape.

But the clearest indicator of crisis at Ware is the number of suicide attempts.

Of the 243 recorded across Louisiana’s juvenile facilities in 2019 and 2020, a quarter were at Ware, though it holds only about 5 percent of the system’s beds. (The state did not provide comparable data for 2021.)

One child who tried to kill herself was Cora Sepulvado. Her breaking point, she said in an interview, came soon after Solan’s death, following incidents of physical abuse and torment by guards.

Standing on a chair, in tears, preparing to hang herself, she noticed something odd: a guard holding up a cellphone, recording it all. “I looked at them, like why aren’t y’all stopping me?” she said. Three guards confirmed that their colleague had been filming.

One of those guards walked into the building just as Cora kicked the chair out from under her feet and rushed to take her down. But for Cora, now 19 and trying to complete high school, the sight of the guard filming her answered a question she had often been forced to confront at Ware: Was anyone actually going to help her?

“That’s all I really wanted to know — if somebody really cared.”

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HEADLINE	10/29 Hong Kong largest illegal drugs seizure
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/10/29/Hong-Kong-meth-Australia-Mexico/7481667053082/
GIST	Oct. 29 (UPI) -- Authorities in Hong Kong said they seized more than \$198 million of methamphetamine after uncovering a shipment arriving from Mexico on Saturday.

	<p>Customs officials found two tons of liquid meth hidden in cartons of coconut water en route for Australia on Saturday. It was the city's biggest seizure of illegal drugs ever.</p> <p>Henry Fong Heung-wing, a customs assistant superintendent with the service's drug investigation bureau, told reporters that the consignment was selected for inspection because coconut water was an unusual cargo from Mexico.</p> <p>He added intelligence reports had also warned of the likelihood of a large amount of liquid meth, also known as methamphetamine or "ice," passing through the city.</p> <p>"We had been alerted in an exchange of intelligence with overseas law enforcement agencies that a huge consignment of ice would be coming to Hong Kong from Mexico this month," he said.</p> <p>Lee Ka-ming, the head of the drug investigation bureau at Hong Kong customs, said that the shipment likely came from a massive international drug trafficking ring.</p> <p>"We believe the liquid meth, of high purity, came from South America," he said. "It was packaged there and shipped via a convoluted route to Hong Kong, to be sent to Australia."</p> <p>No arrests have been made yet.</p> <p>The meth haul was the second found in a shipment from Mexico to Australia in less than two weeks.</p> <p>Customs officials crystal meth hidden in an air consignment of electrical transformers from Mexico on October 14. The drugs were also destined for Sydney.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 DNA evidence frees man jailed for decades
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/california-los-angeles-e12697ac9bfb9d45dc114463c7c24f78?utm_source=Connatix&utm_medium=HomePage
GIST	<p>LOS ANGELES (AP) — A man who spent more than 38 years behind bars for a 1983 murder and two attempted murders has been released from a California prison after long-untested DNA evidence pointed to a different person, the Los Angeles County district attorney said Friday.</p> <p>The conviction of Maurice Hastings, 69, and a life sentence were vacated during an Oct. 20 court hearing at the request of prosecutors and his lawyers from the Los Angeles Innocence Project at California State University, Los Angeles.</p> <p>"I prayed for many years that this day would come," Hastings said at a news conference Friday, adding: "I am not pointing fingers; I am not standing up here a bitter man, but I just want to enjoy my life now while I have it."</p> <p>"What has happened to Mr. Hastings is a terrible injustice," District Attorney George Gascón said in a statement. "The justice system is not perfect, and when we learn of new evidence which causes us to lose confidence in a conviction, it is our obligation to act swiftly."</p> <p>The victim in the case, Roberta Wydermyer, was sexually assaulted and killed by a single gunshot to the head, authorities said. Her body was found in the trunk of her vehicle in the Los Angeles suburb of Inglewood.</p> <p>Hastings was charged with special-circumstance murder and the district attorney's office sought the death penalty but the jury deadlocked. A second jury convicted him and he was sentenced in 1988 to life in prison without possibility of parole.</p>

	<p>Hastings has maintained he was innocent since the time of his arrest.</p> <p>At the time of the victim's autopsy, the coroner conducted a sexual assault examination and semen was detected in an oral swab, the district attorney's statement said.</p> <p>Hastings sought DNA testing in 2000 but at that time the DA's office denied the request. Hastings submitted a claim of innocence to the DA's Conviction Integrity Unit last year and DNA testing last June found that the semen was not his.</p> <p>The DNA profile was put into a state database this month and was matched to a person who was convicted of an armed kidnapping in which a female victim was placed in a vehicle's trunk as well as the forced oral copulation of a woman.</p> <p>That suspect, whose name was not released, died in prison in 2020.</p> <p>The district attorney's office said it is working with police to further investigate the involvement of the dead person in the case.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Ex-JBLM colonel jailed 5yrs for assault
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/former-jblm-colonel-sentenced-for-beating-wife-in-front-of-their-kids-causing-armed-standoff-docs
GIST	<p>PIERCE COUNTY, Wash. - A former Joint Base Lewis-McChord Army Colonel was sentenced to five years in prison on Friday for assaulting his wife while armed with a firearm, and causing a standoff with police back in 2020.</p> <p>Colonel Owen Ray, a former chief of staff at JBLM, was convicted last month of second-degree assault, felony harassment and reckless endangerment after he beat his wife and aimed a gun at her in front of their three children inside their DuPont home.</p> <p>According to court documents, in December 2020, Ray got into an argument with his wife after he had been drinking. Ray's wife hid from him inside their youngest children's bedroom. When Ray found her calling the police, he became furious, and started kicking her repeatedly in the face and body.</p> <p>When police arrived, his wife and children came outside. Court records say Ray told officers over the phone that he had killed people in the past and had no problem killing police officers if they tried to arrest him. Police also saw Ray holding a gun during the standoff.</p> <p>After about two hours of negotiation, Ray surrendered and was arrested.</p> <p>On Friday, a Pierce County judge sentenced Ray to five years in prison. In addition, he has been ordered to have no contact with his children for at least five years.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Everett stores' managers decry retail thefts
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/i-wish-something-could-be-done-fred-meyer-managers-shoppers-say-theft-consuming-everett-stores/T5DXLTZRTBFYBDRE3DVIUB6JVM/
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. — Employees at Fred Meyer stores in Everett are asking city officials for more help to address organized retail theft.</p> <p>Ron Biley, who shops regularly at the Fred Meyer on Evergreen Way in Everett, said he's witnessed it first-hand.</p>

"I've seen workers actually try to stop people from stealing, and then the people (who are) stealing want to fight the workers. A few weeks ago, I had to intervene," Biley said. "It's sad. I hate that my daughter sees this. I wish something could be done about it."

Fred Meyer managers David Webster and Tyler Stumpf shared their concerns with Everett City Council during Wednesday's meeting. They both said they're out of options, which have included private security, video monitoring devices, and calling law enforcement when incidents occur.

"The level of theft is making our customers afraid," Webster said on Wednesday, claiming his employees have had their cars stolen and vandalized. He also claimed one of his employees was abducted in the parking lot. Everett police could not confirm or deny if these claims were accurate.

Stumpf, a manager at the Fred Meyer on Evergreen Way, told council members about an organized theft ring at his store.

"The drug dealers show up in their cars. They give the users a list of what they need to come in and steal, and they come steal. They leave drug paraphernalia all over the store, whether it's needles or foils from the fentanyl. They also use our restrooms as a place to shoot up or do fentanyl. We have an open-air drug market," Stumpf said on Wednesday. "We just need some help and some support."

This past June, Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson announced the creation of the statewide Organized Retail Crime Theft Task Force. It focuses on organized crime rings that account for about \$70 billion in retail losses nationwide.

Washington retailers lost \$2.7 billion to organized retail crime in 2021, according to an analysis by the Retail Industry Leaders Association.

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HEADLINE	10/29 Bellingham Halloween party fatal shooting
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/21-year-old-shot-killed-during-altercation-halloween-party-bellingham/GC4EOXYLMBBX7KPADLBPXSMBHE/
GIST	<p>BELLINGHAM, Wash. — Police are investigating after an altercation led to a fatal shooting at a Halloween party in Bellingham on Friday.</p> <p>At about 11:59 p.m., police responded to a reported shooting in the 500 block of East Myrtle Street.</p> <p>Arriving officers found a 21-year-old man with a gunshot wound to the torso inside the doorway of a residence.</p> <p>Police took over lifesaving measures from witnesses who were already performing CPR before transferring care to Bellingham Fire Department medics.</p> <p>The man died of his injuries at the scene.</p> <p>Witnesses told police the shooting occurred after an altercation between the victim and Brian A. Pantoja, 22.</p> <p>Pantoja reportedly shot the victim in the chest, then fled the scene with his friends, according to police.</p> <p>After responding to the residence, officers immediately began searching for Pantoja, who was linked to a white Dodge Charger, which was involved in a hit-and-run collision earlier in the night.</p> <p>Police returned to the scene of the hit-and-run and witnessed the Dodge Charger leaving the area, but were unable to contact Pantoja.</p>

	<p>Officers continued to search for him, with the support of the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office, and eventually located the vehicle in a parking lot in the 1900 block of Alabama Street.</p> <p>With the help of two K-9s, police were able to determine that Pantoja was inside a nearby apartment.</p> <p>Police were watching the apartment when they saw him walking out to a waiting car. He was then taken into custody without incident.</p> <p>He was later booked into the Whatcom County Jail on charges of first-degree murder and unlawful possession of a firearm.</p> <p>As Pantoja is a convicted felon, he is not permitted to have a firearm.</p> <p>Detectives and crime scene investigators with BPD will continue to investigate this incident.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/27 Oklahoma house fire 8 dead murder-suicide
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/us/oklahoma-house-fire.html
GIST	<p>Two adults and six children who were found dead at the scene of a house fire near Tulsa, Okla., on Thursday died in an apparent murder-suicide in which the adults are suspects, the authorities said on Friday.</p> <p>The authorities did not release the identities of the victims, who were believed to be members of the same family. Chief Brandon Berryhill of the Broken Arrow Police Department said at a news conference on Friday morning that the children were between the ages of 1 and 13.</p> <p>When firefighters arrived Thursday afternoon, they found the two adults in the front of the house “with significant injuries,” Chief Jeremy Moore of the Broken Arrow Fire Department said at the news conference, adding that the injuries appeared to be “criminal in nature.” He did not describe the type of injuries.</p> <p>The six children were found in one room at the rear of the house where the most of the fire damage was, Chief Moore said.</p> <p>“At this time, we do not believe that any of the victims died from the fire,” he said. The medical examiner’s office will determine the cause of death, he said.</p> <p>“The situation is being investigated as a homicide,” Chief Berryhill said.</p> <p>Detectives recovered firearms from the home, the authorities said. Chief Berryhill said that the police had been called to the residence in the past, but that it had been “numerous years” since they were last summoned there. He did not give further details.</p> <p>The aftermath of the fire in Broken Arrow, a city of about 116,000 people about 15 miles southeast of downtown Tulsa, “is a complex scene” given the damage to the home, according to a statement from the Police Department. The fire was reported shortly after 4 p.m. Thursday.</p> <p>Ethan Hutchins, a spokesman for the Broken Arrow Police Department, said it was “the first homicide incident in Broken Arrow this year.”</p> <p>Lisa Ford, a city councilor in Broken Arrow, said by phone on Thursday night that any type of violence in Broken Arrow is “definitely out of the norm.”</p> <p>“I would just like to ask people to pray,” she said.</p>

	<p>Chief Moore said “no one should have to face this kind of tragedy,” adding “this is a once-in-a-lifetime tragedy.”</p> <p>Chief Berryhill of the Police Department said it was “an extremely difficult time for our city and our departments.”</p> <p>“We pray that healing will follow this,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Ex-Capitol officer found guilty in Jan 6 role
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/28/us/jan-6-capital-officer-convicted.html
GIST	<p>A former U.S. Capitol Police officer was found guilty on Friday of obstruction of justice for trying to cover up the fact that he had sent Facebook messages to a Jan. 6 rioter offering advice on how to avoid getting caught, the authorities said.</p> <p>The man, Michael A. Riley, 51, could face up to 20 years in prison, following a trial in U.S. District Court in Washington, federal prosecutors said. A jury was unable to reach a verdict on another obstruction of justice charge related to Mr. Riley’s communication with the rioter, federal prosecutors said. It was not immediately clear whether prosecutors intend to retry him on that count.</p> <p>Mr. Riley, a member of the agency’s K-9 unit with more than 25 years on the force, was the only Capitol Police officer charged with a crime in connection with the attack on the Capitol, when many of his fellow officers were beaten by a mob of Trump followers spurred on by the lie of widespread election fraud.</p> <p>Christopher Macchiaroli, a lawyer for Mr. Riley, said Friday night that his client had not obstructed a grand jury proceeding and would appeal the guilty verdict if it stands. He said that the federal judge on the case, Amy Berman Jackson, had yet to rule on a motion for judgment of acquittal.</p> <p>On Jan. 6, 2021, Mr. Riley was not working at the Capitol building during the attack, but he was aware it was taking place and responded after reports of an explosive device near the Capitol complex, according to a statement Friday from the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia.</p> <p>The day after the attack, a Facebook friend of Mr. Riley’s with whom he had never exchanged messages posted images on the social media site of himself inside the Capitol during the attack, according to a federal indictment from October 2021. The indictment said that Mr. Riley did not know the man personally but had become acquainted through their mutual interest in fishing.</p> <p>Rather than forwarding the information to the authorities, prosecutors said, Mr. Riley sent the rioter — who was not named in the indictment — a private message with advice about how to avoid being caught.</p> <p>“I’m a Capitol Police officer who agrees with your political stance,” the officer wrote to the man, according to the indictment. “Take down the part about being in the building they are currently investigating and everyone who was in the building” is going to be charged, he wrote. “Just looking out!”</p> <p>Mr. Riley and the man exchanged dozens of messages that day and hundreds in the following days, prosecutors said.</p> <p>“I’m glad you got out of there unscathed,” Mr. Riley wrote at one point. “We had over 50 officers hurt, some pretty bad.”</p> <p>On Jan. 20, 2021, the unidentified man turned himself in to the police and told them he had been talking with Mr. Riley, then warned the officer that federal law enforcement officials were aware they had been communicating.</p>

	<p>“The F.B.I. was very curious that I had been speaking to you if they haven’t already asked you about me they are gonna,” the man wrote to Mr. Riley, according to the indictment. “They took my phone and downloaded everything.”</p> <p>After receiving that message, Mr. Riley deleted all his Facebook messages with the man, and the next day, sent him a final Facebook message, according to the indictment. Prosecutors said the last message was Mr. Riley’s attempt at a cover story, in which he pretended to scold the rioter for his conduct.</p> <p>“Another mutual friend was talking about you last night,” he wrote. “I tried to defend you but then he showed me a video of you in the Capitol smoking weed and acting like a moron. I have to say, I was shocked and dumbfounded, since your story of getting pushed in the building with no other choice now seems not only false but is a complete lie. I feel like a moron for believing you.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/29 Portland volunteer sleuths find stolen cars
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/29/us/portland-car-thefts-crime.html
GIST	<p>PORTLAND — At the end of a quiet residential street in north Portland, Titan Crawford took a calming drag off his cigarette, and then shuffled past the gutted shell of a stolen Nissan pickup truck and into the patch of woodlands beyond.</p> <p>A little ways in, there was a Mazda sedan, flipped upside down. He passed a Cadillac Escalade, its rainbow bumper sticker one of the few features that remained intact. In the bushes nearby, there was a boat filled with furniture, tires and shoes. Mr. Crawford checked vehicle identification numbers and captured videos of an array of metal hulks along the way, but came away disappointed.</p> <p>“Nothing here is salvageable,” he said.</p> <p>For much of the past year, Mr. Crawford, 38, has led a growing network of volunteer sleuths who scour Portland’s streets, alleys and forests, racing against time in hopes of finding stolen vehicles before they end up shredded for parts.</p> <p>There is no shortage of work to be done. Vehicle thefts in Portland are on track to reach well over 10,000 this year, more than triple the number the city recorded a decade ago, part of a nationwide trend that accelerated during the coronavirus pandemic. In Portland, the brazenness of the crimes, inattention from the police and desperation of residents who suddenly find themselves missing one of their most valuable possessions has led many to take matters into their own hands.</p> <p>“It would be cool if the city could do this and I didn’t have to,” Mr. Crawford said. Similar groups have popped up and grown around the country as vehicle thefts have soared.</p> <p>For Mr. Crawford’s network, the effort is less about vigilante justice — his group rules say that people who take the law into their own hands will not be tolerated — and more about community building and expanding eyes and ears around town.</p> <p>Rewards aren’t allowed either: The group wants people motivated by a desire to help, rather than focusing on finding cars that might earn money.</p> <p>Neighbors share pictures of license plates, keep watch during commutes to work and hunt online for reports of stolen vehicles.</p> <p>Nearly every day, the group, PDX Stolen Cars, helps a resident reconnect with a vehicle in Portland or the surrounding suburbs.</p> <p>“This is an army, and it’s exploding,” said Victoria Johnson, who joined the group after someone drove off with her SUV while she was helping at the scene of a car accident. “It does a body good to give back and help.”</p>

The nation is on track to record about 1.1 million stolen vehicles this year, the highest number in more than a decade but still well below numbers set in the early 1990s, when many cars were easy to steal without a key, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau, an insurance industry group that tracks claims. The trend appears to be connected in part to the pandemic, as disruptions in the supply chain have created a surge in the value of catalytic converters and other car parts and have made vehicles a more lucrative target for theft, said David Glawe, the bureau's chief executive.

Carjackings are also [up significantly in many cities](#), including Portland, where the police said they did not keep statistics but had [noticed a spike in reports](#).

Car thefts have lately taken a back seat to more violent offenses. Portland set a record for homicides last year and [could surpass that number](#) this year, part of a rise in crime that has deepened public unease and reverberated in the race for governor in Oregon, where a Republican has [a possible path to victory](#) for the first time in four decades. The Republicans also have their sights on [three House seats](#) in the state, where G.O.P. candidates have [focused some of their attacks](#) on the public protests against police brutality that rocked Portland in 2020.

The Portland Police Bureau said staffing challenges had prevented it from doing more to help solve car thefts. Last year, as the department struggled to retain and recruit officers and the city shrank the number of authorized positions, the department [employed fewer sworn officers than at any point in the past 30 years](#), although it has recently started growing again.

Sgt. Kevin Allen said the police bureau has often had to prioritize other crimes over vehicle theft but is not ignoring them. One precinct, he said, has undertaken occasional special missions to target and recover stolen vehicles.

“Unfortunately,” he said, “it’s not hard to find them.”

Older vehicles, which often lack alarms or modern security systems that prevent hot-wiring, remain among the most popular to steal. But newer vehicles can also be snatched when people leave their key fobs inside the car, or thanks to videos that show people how to steal some vehicles with little more than a USB charging cable.

The results can be disastrous for people with limited incomes, or those who do not carry comprehensive insurance on their vehicles. A theft or a stolen catalytic converter can mean being left without a vehicle, or with a bill they cannot afford.

“That’s absolutely devastating. And we are seeing that over and over,” Mr. Glawe said.

Enter the citizen patrol.

Mr. Crawford said he first became caught up in looking for Portland’s missing cars a year ago when he was walking his dog and came across a vehicle that looked out of place. He posted a photo of it on social media, and was soon gathering the many people interested in the issue into a Facebook group. What started as a membership of dozens became hundreds, and then thousands, with many people trying to track down their own vehicles.

One man was able to recover a cherished motorcycle that he uses to honor veterans at military funerals. The group located the stolen car of a police officer’s wife.

Ms. Johnson found the group after losing her Lincoln Navigator during the roadside stop and went scouring online for a way to track it down. She didn’t stop there, and drove a meticulous grid through the area where her vehicle had been taken.

She didn't find it, but she did spot another man's vehicle that had been posted to the group, which helped him recover it. Days later, that same man texted with a surprise: He had found Ms. Johnson's vehicle. She now spends several days a week checking her area for stolen cars and says she has discovered several.

Nicole Heath, one of the administrators of the group, hunts for vehicles during every one of her commutes. Once, she saw and reported someone trying to break into a car with a screwdriver. Another time, some people yelled at her for examining a car that had been reported stolen. She proceeds with caution and urges others to do so, noting that one woman looking for stolen vehicles was assaulted when she was seen taking videos of cars parked in a homeless encampment.

"No car is worth your life," said Ms. Heath, who became active in the group after her husband's motorcycle was stolen in January. It has not been recovered.

The hunt for missing vehicles has become a second job for Mr. Crawford, who sells trucks for a living and has a deep familiarity with vehicle brands and styles from years in auto sales.

On a recent day off, Mr. Crawford was at his computer by 7 a.m., downing coffee as he reviewed emails and Facebook messages, using an online database of vehicle history reports to check vehicle identification numbers that users had shared of vehicles that seemed out of place — some with torn-out interiors, damaged ignitions or that were otherwise seemingly abandoned.

Later in the morning, Mr. Crawford got in his red pickup, which was leaking coolant from some deferred maintenance and sporting scratch marks down the side from a vehicle recovery mission that had taken him deep into the woods. He rolled down his windows, tuning in to the happenings around him and scouring side streets.

At one point, he pulled behind a Toyota SUV that was emitting an unusual buzzing noise.

"The anthem of Portland: no catalytic converter," he said, sipping a can of Red Bull.

Minutes later, Mr. Crawford pulled up at the scene of a vehicle in northeast Portland that had been reported by neighbors, a car with no plates and a partially gutted interior. He checked the VIN, found it had recently been reported as stolen and notified the police.

He spent the rest of the day roaming through neighborhoods, capturing videos of cars that seemed out of place so he could check the license plates later. Many stolen cars that can still be recovered end up resurfacing in industrial neighborhoods, at auto supply stores, in parks or shopping centers, he said.

Homeless encampments are also a common spot, Mr. Crawford said as he cruised past one of them, taking care not to bother residents. He said some homeless neighbors have joined the group to help find cars. At the encampments, he overlooks any other minor misdeeds he may encounter.

"My only interest is stolen vehicles," he said. "They can do whatever they want. Just don't bother me. And don't drive stolen cars."

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HEADLINE	10/28 Pittsburgh funeral shooting: 6 injured
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/10/28/Pittsburgh-funeral-shooting/1231666990280/
GIST	<p>Oct. 28 (UPI) -- Six people were wounded Friday after gunfire erupted outside of a funeral on Pittsburgh's North Side.</p> <p>Pittsburgh Police Commander Rick Ford said that one person was in critical condition and the other five victims were in stable condition, CNN reported.</p> <p>The shooting began around noon outside of Destiny of Faith church, where the funeral for 20-year-old John Hornezes Jr. was being held.</p>

	<p>Hornezes was among three people shot and killed Oct. 15 near a gas station. Two women at a nearby bus stop were killed in that shooting.</p> <p>According to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, the funeral was being livestreamed on YouTube, and footage showed horrified attendees screaming and ducking for cover as muffled but loud bangs can be heard.</p> <p>Someone shouted above the din of terror for everyone to stay inside.</p> <p>Ford said it was unclear whether the shooting was related to the Oct. 15 incident.</p> <p>"Any relation or what might have precipitated this shooting is still under investigation," he said.</p> <p>Ford said it was likely that more than one gunman was involved in Friday's shooting.</p> <p>He said that Pittsburgh had recorded 59 homicides so far this year, 5% more than the same time last year. However, the number of nonfatal shootings has decreased from 115 to 141.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/28 Arrest: student threat Halloween shooting
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/enumclaw-middle-school-student-arrested-after-alleged-threat/YDU6PDNNMBBQ7CYLDKBA7VATPM/
GIST	<p>ENUMCLAW, Wash. — A student at Enumclaw Middle School was arrested Thursday after allegedly threatening to carry out a shooting at the school on Halloween, according to the Enumclaw Police Department.</p> <p>The school contacted the EPD school resource officer at about 9 a.m. after other students at the school reported the threats to administrators.</p> <p>The school resource officer and a detective from EPD investigated the threats and found them to be credible.</p> <p>According to police, the student who allegedly made the threats was not in the building at the time and there was no immediate threat.</p> <p>After identifying the suspect and his current address, police made contact with him and he was taken into custody.</p> <p>“We are incredibly proud of the students who reported the threat that was made to their principal and local law enforcement,” said the Enumclaw School District in a statement posted to its Facebook page. “These reports are evidence that students and families care deeply about fostering a safe learning environment for all students and staff at our schools. The safety of students and staff remains our priority, and we encourage our families to continue to have conversations with students about reporting any concerns.”</p>
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